



THALIA;

OR,

ARIANISM AND THE COUNCIL OF NICE.

AN

Historical Tale of the Fourth Century.

BY THE ABBÉ A. BAYLE,

Author of the "Pearl of Antioch."

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY A SISTER OF ST. JOSEPH.

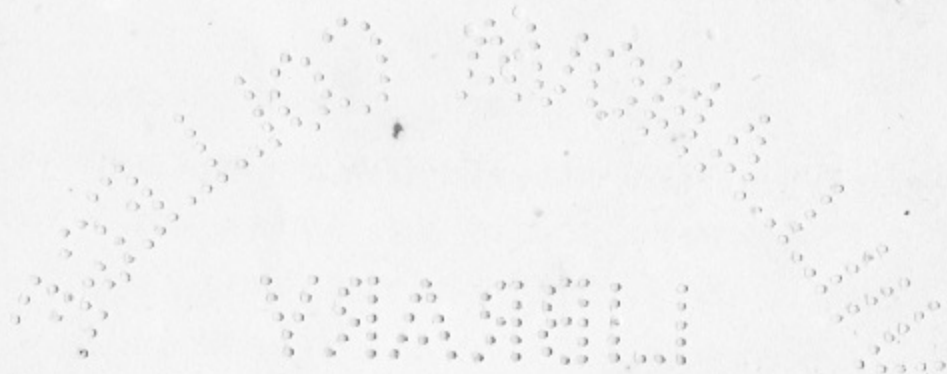
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THE public has been so kind as to accord a favorable reception to the "Pearl of Antioch:" may it be equally indulgent to the work we now present. Our endeavor has been to sketch an episode in the history of the Church at that time when Constantine, become Christian, convokes the first Ecumenical Council, in the hope of restoring peace to the Eastern Church, agitated by the Arian heresy. Our book has nothing in common with the novel save the form and appearance. It is too serious, too true, to be ranked among works simply amusing. Fiction occupies herein only a secondary place: it serves but as a frame or setting to a few pictures of the Roman world and the Church in the beginning of the fourth century—pictures traced with a fidelity of outline which may, perhaps, win pardon for the dulness of the coloring. It is not our principal end to move the reader by causing him to assist at the divers scenes of a pathetic drama: we would fain interest him while reminding him of the

trials of the Church, of the glorious triumphs of her apostles, martyrs, and most illustrious doctors.

In writing *Thalia* we imposed on ourself an unpleasant task; for to give a clear knowledge of the Arian heresy, it was necessary to enter on unavoidable theological discussions of the most abstruse points of Christian dogma. How, then, was it possible to be at once concise and plain? How win to these dry pages the reader who seeks for brief narration? More than once we were tempted to abandon a work so arduous, but we as often reanimated our courage, and we now trust that criticism will take into consideration the difficulties we have had to surmount.





CHAPTER I.	PAGE
ARLES IN 314	7
CHAPTER II.	
METRODORUS THE RHETORICIAN	33
CHAPTER III.	
A CENTURION IN RETREAT	61
CHAPTER IV.	
RHODANIA	89
CHAPTER V.	
ARIUS	118
CHAPTER VI.	
THE CHURCH AND THE THEATRE.	145
CHAPTER VII.	
VICTORY	173
CHAPTER VIII.	
CRISPUS AND FAUSTA	200

CHAPTER IX.

	PAGE
THE LATERAN PALACE	231

CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST GENERAL COUNCIL	261
-------------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XI.

THREE CHRISTIAN POETS	291
---------------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XII.

THE NICENE CREED	315
----------------------------	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION	339
----------------------	-----

NOTES	367
-----------------	-----





THALIA;

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CHAPTER I.

ARLES IN 314.

ARLES was one of the most important cities of Southern Gaul at the time when Augustus, more fortunate than Cæsar, was proclaimed emperor. As sole ruler over the kingdoms of the ancient world, transformed into Roman provinces by the arms of the Republic, he wished to know how many subjects bowed beneath that sceptre, which, under his immediate successors, was to become so bloody. Mistress of the navigation of the Rhone, the city of Arles had long been the centre of considerable commerce, when Julius Cæsar caused to be built in her docks twelve vessels of war, destined to attack by sea, while his legions besieged by land, the proud city of Marseilles, whose inhabitants, enamored of their liberty, and dreading him as a master, refused to recognize his authority. Surrounded by fortifications, adorned

with numerous monuments, Arles received a colony, established by "Julius the Father," *Colonia Julia paterna Arelatensis*. Julius the Younger, that is, Octavius, become the Emperor Augustus, caused the completion of those edifices whose foundations had been laid by Cæsar. Arles soon merited the surname of Gallic Rome, given her in the IVth century by the poet Ausonius, *Gallula Roma Arelas*.

The first Christian emperor added new splendor to the ancient city which owed its chief renown to the first pagan emperor. Constantine was pleased with Arles. He assigned it as the residence of the Pretorian prefect, and frequently resided there himself. It gave birth to one of his sons, who afterwards bore his name and his crown, but inherited neither his genius nor his good fortune. When the Christian soldiers became so numerous that one could foresee that, with a general worthy of the command, the defeat of paganism would be assured, Constantine drew from Southern Gaul the greater part of the valiant army which won for him the empire of the world. Would he not then willingly reside in the most flourishing city of that fortunate country which the Romans called *the province by excellence*?

After the decisive victory won by the Christian army of Constantine over the pagan forces of Maxentius, not far from the bridge of Milvius, Arles celebrated, with as joyful transports as Rome herself, that memorable event destined to renew the face of the earth. The triumph of the youthful em-

peror presaged the triumph of the Church. From that moment the Christians felt that the era of persecution was at its close, and that the future was theirs.

Hiding no longer in the subterranean gloom of the Catacombs, they openly displayed the pomp of their worship. On every side rose basilicas, grander and vaster than the pagan temples, and the gospel was freely preached to all nations. Freed at last from the fury of the Cæsars, the Church had nothing to fear save their protection.

About two years after the battle of Pont Milvius, in the February of 314, two young men, returning from a walk in the woods, which then extended above Arles, entered the city by the path skirting the Rhone. They were about the same age, and united in friendship, the bonds of which had been strengthened during two years of study, pursued together with the same literary tastes, the same philosophical curiosity. One of them, Cerealis, wore a pallium of sober color, and practised Christianity with all the ardor of a neophyte. The other, Albinus, was elegantly dressed. Born of pagan parents, he thought it obligatory on him to remain faithful to their worship; nevertheless he felt the absurdity of the Greco-Latin polytheism, and yielded, despite himself, to the influence of the Christian doctrine.

The two friends paused for some moments on the banks of the river to contemplate, with all the enthusiasm of youth, the beautiful scene that lay before them. The pale rays of the setting sun

gilded the summits of those monuments erected by the munificence of the emperors and the gratitude of the colony, from the time of Cæsar to that of Constantine. A rosy hue gave a ruinous aspect to the arches of the amphitheatre; to the columns scarcely resting on their bases; to the triumphal arches recently erected. Arles then presented the appearance of a pagan city. Those imposing walls which rose above the simple dwellings of its inhabitants, sheltered neither prayer nor charity; they were not sanctified by the shadow of the cross. They enclosed no temples consecrated to the true God, no charitable asylums open to the poor and the suffering. All those immense edifices, so richly adorned, had been constructed only to occupy the people, and console them for their vanished liberty by spectacles and games incessantly renewed. They were places of pleasure and not of sacrifice; haunts of distraction, not of recollection. There lay the arena, where thirty thousand spectators applauded the expiring gladiator; the theatre, where actors, bold even to obscenity, provoked the coarse laughter of the populace; the circus, whither flocked the wealthiest of the citizens eager for the chariot races, and the baths frequented by all classes of society.

But even then, upon the ruins of a temple of the "Good Goddess," was rising the first metropolitical church of Arles, the basilica of St. Mary Major, and soon after, at the extremity of the Champs-Elysées, the chapel dedicated to the Blessed Virgin,

then still living, was to be enlarged, while waiting the time when its octagonal tower should rise towards the heavens bearing the name of St. Honoratus.

"How powerful is Rome!" exclaimed Albinus, after a long silence of admiration. "It is the genius of Rome alone that can erect on the banks of the Rhone as well as on those of the Tiber, those imperishable monuments which defy the ravages of time. Who could tell how many blocks of marble have been hewn by the chisel to form that gigantic amphitheatre, from whose marble steps thirty thousand persons can enjoy the same spectacle?"

"And who could tell," added Cerealis, "how many slaves have been employed to quarry those blocks, to transport them hither, to cut them, to lay them in their places? How many slaves have been torn by the lash of the slave-master charged to expedite their labors? However beautiful those Roman monuments, they sadden me! To me those stones seem united by an indescribable cement, by the blood, the sweat of hosts of slaves condemned to homicidal labors, thus to procure to their masters a few moments of pleasure. And yet, the time is at hand when slavery shall cease to be a social institution; when all men shall be free because they have one common origin and destiny; when he who possesses neither land nor money shall possess at least his arms; shall be the master of his strength and skill, and be free to

give his labor to whosoever wishes it, and is willing to recompense him therefor."

"It would be better to lighten the yoke of slavery than to abolish it: were slavery to cease, who would build all those grand edifices which so adorn a city?"

"Does man lose his strength and dexterity when he is no longer threatened by the rod of a merciless master? Beholding what has been produced by servile labor, you may understand what would be the result of free labor. We admire those monuments erected by slaves under the dominion of force. Ah, how much more magnificent shall be those structures, one day to be raised by free men under the empire of love! How wonderfully shall their chisels carve the stones, and endow them almost with life! How perfectly shall they reproduce, in inexhaustible variety, all the beauties of nature, whom they will love as a mother, because they will enjoy her in liberty! Their temples shall rise heavenward like winged arrows, bearing even into the bosom of the clouds the cross of our Redeemer."

"Live in those beautiful dreams, *Cerealis* — they are the charm of life. As for me, I pity the slaves whom I oblige to serve me, as I pity the sheep and oxen killed to nourish me; but I cannot dispense with either one or the other. It is necessary that one-half of mankind suffer, that the rest may enjoy life. It is the decree of fate; so much the worse for those whom it condemns, so much the better

for those whom it spares. Can you imagine it could ever be pleasant to labor, to quarry stone, to dig metals from the depths of the mines? Man can be made to labor only by force or interest. How much more money would we require to get free men to work through interest, than we pay for our slaves who work by force? To abolish slavery would be to abolish great fortunes; it would be to render impossible, not only those celebrated banquets which cost two million sesterces, but also those magnificent shows given to the people, those combats of elephants, struggles of the gladiators, and such grand constructions as the theatres of Scaurus, Metullus, and Pompey."

"It is precisely in that, that I rejoice. Then shall be less revolting that inequality of social conditions among men equal by nature, which can never wholly disappear."

While thus discussing the question of slavery, the two friends reached the bridge which Constantine had caused to be thrown over the Rhone, and which permitted the city to extend itself on both banks of the river.¹ They advanced to the

¹Constantine's bridge has disappeared. There remain only the first stones fallen from the arch still to be seen, at low tide, in the neighborhood of the Rue Chiavary. A part of the structure, built of enormous blocks, sheltered under the rampart, projects into the Rhone under the form of an octagonal abutment. One can readily distinguish the ruins of an overhanging vault, the lateral surfaces of which are adorned with sculptures and furnished with bronze rings.—V. ESTRANGIN, *Description of Arles*.

middle of the bridge, listening to the murmur of the waves as they broke against the arches, and for a moment they contemplated the city under another aspect. As they entered by the gate nearest the bridge, their eyes met, here and there, evident signs of the triumph of Christianity. Upon the walls of several dwellings inhabited by Christians, were rudely engraven the Labarum of Constantine, and the prophetic words which had announced his victory through the sign of the cross. Passing before the portico which surrounded the great market, they could read, on the two pilasters of the principal gate, the edict recently published at Milan by Constantine and Licinius, granting entire liberty to the Christian worship. The edict was engraven on two large plates of metal, on one side in Greek, on the other in Latin.

“Religious liberty should not be restrained; every one has a right to follow that worship most agreeable to him. On this account, we have recently published an edict, which permits to all Christians, each in the sect of his choice, the free exercise of his religion. However, as our former rescript gave explicitly the names of divers authorized Christian sects, some have thence taken occasion either to make reservations or arbitrary interpretations which pervert the sense of our law. Consequently, we, Constantine and Licinius, august emperors, reunited at Milan under happy auspices, in our solicitude for the great interests of the public good, are preoccupied above all with the

regulations relative to religion, and the worship of the Divinity by according to Christians and all others, permission to follow freely the religion of their choice; thus to draw on ourselves and the empire the protection of God who dwells in heaven. We hereby declare that our formal will, inspired by this wise and salutary counsel, is, that in future no person be denied the right to embrace and follow the Christian religion and worship. Every one who so wishes will be allowed to embrace that faith. You will readily understand that this concession, made to Christians absolutely and simply, is extended to other worships or rites, whether particular or public. For it conduces, evidently, to the glory and tranquillity of our reign, that each of our subjects should enjoy religious liberty, and that we should not be suspected of placing obstacles to the worship of the Divinity. You will cause this edict to be published everywhere, and will give it universal publicity, to the end that no one be ignorant of these dispositions of our sovereign goodness."

Cerealis, showing the edict of Constantine to Albinus, asked :

"What would be said by Nero, Domitian, Trajan, and all the emperors who signed edicts of persecution against us, had any one foretold them that one day their successors would protect our worship? Diocletian boasted that he had exterminated the Christian superstition; and yet, before his death, he has learned in his obscure retreat what sign

was borne by Constantine's soldiers on their victorious standards."

"Rejoice for the present, but fear the future," replied Albinus. "He who triumphs to-day may, perhaps, be vanquished to-morrow. Let the head of an army become emperor, attribute to Jupiter his sudden elevation; he will set himself to reëstablish the worship of the gods, protectors of Rome. He will detest and proscribe your new religion."

"We are too numerous. It is we, rather, who could proscribe and exterminate, did we not adore a God who commands us to love our enemies and do good to those who persecute us. Henceforth there will be no army, regular, valiant and well-disciplined, save that whose legions are composed of Christian soldiers. We can put ourselves under the protection of the Cæsars, but they have need of our support. The political genius of Constantine is not deceived. He would never attain to the empire were he to declare against the Christians; yet, were he to declare for us against the pagans, he would make for himself too many enemies. He, then, proclaims religious liberty. It is the greatest benefit that could be granted us, and we ask no other; it is enough for us to be free. If, during three centuries of persecution, we have become so numerous, and have spread from one end of the empire to the other, how wonderful shall be our spiritual conquests, now that the Gospel is free to enlighten minds and move all hearts!"

"You will, perhaps, regret the era of persecu-

tion, when the sword no longer hangs over your heads. Your fervor will grow cool. The same strength of soul will not be yours; and yet, energy is required for the practice of the austerities your creed imposes on you. If the emperor favor your worship, courtiers will eagerly embrace it; many will be Christians in name but pagan in heart. To external combats will succeed intestine struggles; danger unites you, prosperity will divide you. From among yourselves shall rise sects who will bitterly attack one another. Each will try to obtain Cæsar's protection, that it may triumph over its rivals. Even now it is said that the Christians of Africa are in arms against one another. Those fratricidal wars will be more fatal to you than pagan persecutions."

Cerealis bowed his head sadly, and heaving a profound sigh, replied:

"You speak, alas! but too truly. Domestic enemies are more to be feared than those from without. We shall have to encounter new trials, but Jesus Christ has promised to remain with us even to the consummation of ages. We shall overcome all obstacles. We shall live, despite all apparent causes of death, and our perpetuity will be the irrefragible proof of our divine institution. Schism is now desolating the African Church. The authors of the trouble, condemned at Rome, have demanded another judgment. A council is about to be assembled at Arles, to judge their cause. It will be the first held in Gaul. May it happily terminate those divisions!"

Their conversation was interrupted by the crowd of persons issuing from the theatre, and spreading into the neighboring streets. Groups of men and women congregated here and there, exchanging opinions, and prolonging their pleasure. The *decurions* and *augustales* mingled with the people, and by their bursts of laughter proved they were still under the spell of the farce they had just witnessed. The son of the prefect of the pretorium walked undistinguished among the crowd. Seeing Albinus, he hastened towards him, and cordially grasped his hand.

"Why were you not at the theatre to-day? Never did I laugh so much. Davus surpassed himself, and was, for this time, admirably seconded by Aper and Priscus. It would be impossible to represent more ludicrously the history of Dædalus and Icarus."

"What *rôle* did Davus fill?"

"That of Icarus, by Pollux! You should have seen him covered with feathers, moving his waxen wings, trying to fly, falling heavily, and then complaining because he had not struck the earth on some other part of his body."

"Was there any blood spilt?"

"Not a drop. We do not live in the time of Nero, who exacted that poor Icarus should be killed by the fall, and that Dædalus should be torn to pieces on the stage by a bear."¹

¹ Icarus primo statim conatu juxta cubiculum ejus decedit ipsumque cruore respersit. (Sueton. Nero, 12.)

Dædale lucano quum sic lacereris ob urso,
Quam cuperes pennas nunc habuisse tuas!

(Martial, *de spectaculis*, 10.)

When the crowd had dispersed, the two friends, continuing their walk, reached the principal entrance of the theatre. It was adorned with statues representing the Muses of tragedy, comedy, and the dance. Beneath the statues were carved immense bas-reliefs, the most remarkable of which represented the mythological legend of Apollo's victory over Marsyas.¹

"At present Marsyas is the conqueror of Apollo," said Cerealis. "The trifling buffooneries of the mimics are more attractive to the people than the serious teachings of the tragic muse."

"And you have truly resolved never to come to the theatre but when you can hear beautiful poetry?"

"Since that day, when, being but a child, I saw at Rome Genesius appear on the stage a comedian, and leave it a martyr, I have never been present at a dramatic representation."

"Let us enter for a moment. There is no one on the benches. The actors are resting, after their pranks and grimaces, behind the scenes. Solitude and silence reign where, but a few moments ago, all was noise and bustle."

They entered. Beautiful marble columns adorned the stage; the ravages of time and men have spared but two of them, which are still to be seen amidst the ruins of the theatre of Arles. On the right rose a colossal statue of Augustus; on the left, a figure of Venus, a copy of a masterpiece of Praxiteles.

¹ This bas-relief is preserved in the museum at Arles.

Three votive altars of white marble were placed between the walls of the proscenium and the large gallery, which extended from one to the other of the two principal entrances, and separated the stage from the orchestra. The middle altar was dedicated to Augustus, who was, for more than a century, one of the protecting divinities of Arles. He was honored with a particular worship. The Augustales, who formed the most flourishing corporation of Arles, were charged at the same time to see that the Lares were not forgotten at the corners of the streets and thoroughfares, and to render to the statues of Augustus the honors due to images of the great divinities. The other altars were dedicated, one to Ceres, the Good Goddess, the other to Venus, protectress of the Julian family, which, according to the poets, was descended from her by Eneas; on the frontal of those altars was carved a wreath of oak-leaves, and on the sides, a patera and a vase for libations.

"How forcibly," said Cerealis, "does the sight of this theatre recall the touching scene which made so deep an impression on my childhood, and revealed to me the mysterious power of Christianity. Ten years have elapsed since that event, yet its details have never been effaced from my memory."

"Let us seat ourselves on the first seat of the second row, and you will tell me the history."

"When I was twelve years old, my father took me to a theatre in Rome called *Themule*. An im-

mense crowd had congregated there to admire the comedian Genesius, who counterfeited, with rare talent, the language, gait, and gesture of the most celebrated Romans. On that occasion the Christian mysteries were to be represented, and the Emperor Diocletian was to be present. When Genesius appeared on the stage, he was received with frantic applause. The people cried out, 'It is Marcellinus! It is the Christians' pontiff.'

"'I am sick, my friends,' said Genesius; 'Oh! help me.'

"'What will help you?'

"'Ah! I find a heavy weight upon me, and would gladly be eased.'

"'Shall we call for the carpenters? They will plane you.'

"'No; call in a Christian priest; he will give me baptism; it is the remedy for all evils.'

"At these words the people clapped their hands and burst into shouts of laughter. A priest and an acolyte appeared on the stage. They approached the couch on which Genesius lay.

"'Dear child,' said they to him, 'why did you send for us?'

"Genesius did not answer for some seconds. A sudden illumination of grace flooding his soul, revealed to him the value of the sacrament of Baptism.

"Shedding tears of repentance, he arose and exclaimed: 'I desire to receive the grace of Jesus Christ, that my soul may be cleansed from sin.'

"The people continued to laugh, thinking the parody most perfect. The actor who was filling the rôle of the priest, approached Genesius with a vessel full of water.

" 'Give me baptism,' said Genesius, 'as it is given in the Christian Church.'

"As he knelt, the actor poured on his head the water in the urn, and pronounced the words used by the Church in the administration of baptism. Genesius arose. Such was the enthusiasm imprinted on his countenance that the audience ceased to laugh. Advancing to the front of the stage, and turning towards Diocletian, Genesius said :

" 'Hear me, O emperor, and you, soldiers, philosophers, and inhabitants of this great city : Up to this day the Christians were, to me, objects of such contempt that I applied myself carefully to study their religion, only that I might amuse you by mimicing their sacred rites ; but at the moment that the water of baptism touched my forehead, I saw a hand extended from heaven towards me. Angels radiant with light floated above my head, and read out of a book all the sins I had committed from my infancy. They plunged that book into the baptismal water, and it suddenly became whiter than snow. Now, then, most illustrious emperor, and all you citizens who, with me, have ridiculed those mysteries, with me, also, believe that Jesus Christ is the true God ; that He is the light, the truth, and all goodness ; and that through Him alone can you obtain your pardon.'

“Diocletian, highly enraged, commanded Genesius to be beaten with rods, and ordered the prefect Plautian to compel him to sacrifice to the false gods. The prefect caused him to be stretched on the rack, and torn with iron hooks; but the martyr remained unshaken. He expired under the torture, murmuring: ‘There is no other God than Him whom I have seen. . . . Christ is on my lips; Christ is in my heart!’ ”

Albinus had not listened to the marvellous recital without emotion.

“At the same time,” continued Cerealis, rising, “another martyr, also named Genesius, died at Arles. He was most skilful in the art of writing, and filled the office of public notary. When the judge commanded him to transcribe an edict of persecution, his soul revolted at the thought of thus concurring in the death of the innocent. He threw his tablets at the judge’s feet, declaring he would never be the accomplice of iniquity. To avoid the fury of the enemies of the Christian name, he tried to swim across the Rhone, and thus put the river between him and the persecutors; but the soldiers, getting immediately on board a boat, arrived, as soon as he, on the opposite bank. They seized him as soon as he landed, and cut off his head. And the blood of that martyr,” continued Cerealis, “has been for Arles the seed of Christians.”

Meditating on the serious thoughts produced by such discourse, the two young men directed their

steps towards the Forum, where their dwellings stood. One of the most recent ornaments of the Forum, which was of considerable extent, was a column of white marble, erected some days before, in honor of the conquerors of Maxentius. On it they read the following short epigraph:

IMP. CAES.

FL. VAL.

CONSTAN

TINO

P. F. AVG.

DIVI

CONSTAN

TI AVG.

PII

FILIO

"To the Emperor Cæsar Flavius Valerius Constantinus; pious, happy, Augustus, son of the divine Constantius Augustus, pious."¹

"That is a laconic inscription," said Albinus.

"There is one word too many."

"Which?"

"That," said Cerealis, pointing to the word *Divine*.

"Is it not to debase oneself, to devote oneself to servitude, to give an emperor the title of divinity? How could the Romans think of their ancient liberty while adoring as gods the masters of the world. Certainly, the Christians know how to render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's. They have truly proved it by having, during three centuries, submitted to

¹ This column is to be seen in the museum of Arles.

torture and death, rather than revolt. But in the emperor they behold only a man, to whom God, for the public good, has confided a part of His authority."

"When we shall be old enough to be decurions, and take our seats in the city council, we will engage our fellow-citizens to be less prodigal of columns, statues, and triumphal arches, and not debase themselves so before the emperors by giving them the title of gods."

At that moment a man hurried towards them, and handed each a billet, which ran as follows:

"The rhetorician, Metrodorus, will deliver a discourse in the theatre on a most interesting subject, on the 8th of the calends of March. On the same day, another very eloquent orator will speak. The admission fee, as usual, six oboli. I invite you to be present."

"Who is that?" asked Cerealis.

"It is Hygias, chief of the little troupe paid by Metrodorus to applaud in the right place when he declaims. Rhetoricians find that their discourses would be too cold were they never interrupted by applause. To arouse their enthusiasm and excite their auditory, they hire applauders, whom they call their choir, their family, and who conscientiously earn their money. That they may be able to clap opportunely and together, they have a leader who gives the signal. Hygias is the leader of Metrodorus's choir, and he is charged to distribute, some days previous to the decla-

mation, the billets of announcement and invitation."

Their attention was drawn to a placard written in large characters, and affixed to a board hanging near the door of the court wherein justice was dispensed.

"The literati of Gallic Rome are informed that two declamations will be given in the theatre on the 8th of the calends of March. There will be joy and sadness at the same time: people will hear one who comes and one who goes. Come and lend us a favorable ear. The entrance fee will be six oboli."

"That placard contains an enigma I would like to have solved," said Albinus. "Valerian alone can tell me the meaning of 'one who comes and one who goes.'"

"I did not know that Valerian was so skilful in interpreting the announcements of the sophists."

"He is well acquainted with Metrodorus and assists at all his declamations."

"Really!"

"I think, nevertheless, that he has less admiration for the rhetorician's eloquence than for the beautiful eyes of his daughter Thalia. No one knows better than he the precise day and hour of each discourse, and the subject of which it will treat. He alone can tell me how on the calends of March, 'there will be, at the same time, joy and sadness.'"

"Let us go to the amphitheatre. Probably we shall meet Valerian. The sun has scarcely set, and it is not dark enough yet for the termination of the military exercises."

Since Constantine, by edict, had forbidden those gladiatorial combats, so dear to the pagans, but so shocking to Christians, the arena of Arles had been used only for military exercises. The management of arms, mock-fights, sieges, assaults and defences, greatly amused the populace, without giving rise to such vivid emotions as those caused by the sight of bloodshed. Arles, which had been fortified by Julius Cæsar, could receive in garrison an entire legion formed of ten cohorts, and comprising six thousand soldiers. But, at the time of which we speak, the city was occupied by only one cohort, divided into three *maniples* or battalions, one of soldiers, armed with lances, *hastati*, another of soldiers who had the honor of entering first into action, called *principes*, another of those who fought in the third rank and formed the *élite* of the army, *triarii*. Each battalion was divided into two *centuries* or brigades of a hundred men, commanded by a centurion. Valerian was the commander of the cohort. Every day several brigades were exercised in the arena, in the skilful use of the lance and sword, in the manner of attack, defence, and pursuit of the enemy.

"I cannot understand," said Cerealis, as they directed their steps to the amphitheatre, "how Valerian and you, who have so much genius, knowl-

edge, and literary taste can listen with pleasure to Metrodorus' orations."

"You are really too severe. If all Christians were as rigid as you, they might, and with reason, be accused of detesting the human race. Valerian is deeply attached to his faith, yet he does not condemn all amusement."

"More than one of the pagan sages share my opinion of rhetoricians. Epictetus forbade his disciples to listen to them: he thought that their pomposity and their thirst for applause were a most pernicious example for young men."

"That was one of Epictetus's exaggerations, who prided himself on teaching a morality as austere as that of the Christians. It is but natural that you should disapprove of the gross plays of the theatre, which, but too often, are offensive to purity; the bloody combats of the mirmillones and bestiarii, the chariot-races, which rarely end without one or two charioteers being crushed to death. But what more innocent than the declamations of the rhetoricians, and what more beautiful than their eloquence?"

"Reserve that word for other discourses than those of Metrodorus and his companions. What great cause do they defend? Do they inspire their auditory with the love of country, the love of God, the love of men? They speak of trifling subjects. They are content with themselves when they round their periods, when they coin new words or resuscitate obsolete ones, when they find ingenious

epithets and enigmatical periphrases. These are not orators; they are amusers of the public."

"You do not blame those who lend an ear to agreeable music—why, then, blame those who listen willingly to a declamation prepared with art?"

"Music fully attains its end when it diverts or moves us, calms our sorrows, redoubles the energy of our feelings; but speech has not been given to man to flatter the ear by high-sounding phrases, by melodious sounds which express no great thought."

"Rhetoricians sometimes remind us forcibly of our duties; they urge us to patience, to contempt of riches, to the pardon of injuries."

"But more frequently their only aim is to display their skill by speaking for an hour on nothing. One will discourse on boldness, another will prove that beautiful things are rare. This one will deliver a eulogy on the peacock, like Antiphonius; that one, on the poll-parrot, as Dion Chrysostom. Here Clitarchus will tell us fine things about the moth, and Polycrates will never tire speaking of the mouse. People run to hear from the lips of the most celebrated rhetorician the complaints of a man who wants to commit suicide because his wife is too talkative, or those of a parasite who, because his horse has run away, cannot enjoy a banquet to which he has been invited by a friend.¹ Such dis-

¹ Those two declamations were by Libanius, who may be called the last of the rhetoricians. "All the city ran to hear

plays of wit are ridiculous, and it is debasing the art of composition to make it the servant of such puerilities. My dear Albinus, if you wish to hear eloquent speaking, enter our churches, mingle with the Christians, lend an ear to the august voice of our prelates. You will be so ravished with the sublimity of the thoughts as not to pay attention to the words. You will be compelled to enter into yourself, to interrogate your conscience, to deplore your weakness and take the resolution of making every sacrifice required by virtue. You will not say of the orator: 'How well he speaks!' but you will cry out: 'How true it is!'"

The sound as of a measured tread fell on their ears. It was the soldiers returning from the amphitheatre. Albinus, approaching the centurion in command, said:

"Has Valerian, by his presence to-day, aroused the ardor of his soldiers?"

"He came towards the end of the exercises. We left him in the arena where you may find him. He is more thoughtful than usual, and I suppose he has some secret trouble."

The centurion's supposition was not incorrect, as Albinus and Cerealis perceived on entering the amphitheatre. Valerian was in the middle of the arena, leaning on a large stake against which the

him," says St. Basil himself, who wrote to his former master to congratulate him, and say that there was but one Libanius in the world, and that he alone could give a soul to eloquence.

soldiers had been employing their strength and skill. His eyes were sadly cast upon the ground. Absorbed in his thoughts, he did not hear his friends until they were near him. Then, raising his head, he recognized them and tried to smile.

"How serious you are," said Albinus. "Are you trying to solve an enigma?"

"Perhaps so."

"I will help you to find it when you explain to me the mysterious announcement which Metrodorus has put up in the Forum."

"Doubtless you desire to know what is meant by the joy and sadness promised at the approaching declamation."

"Just so."

"Metrodorus is about to depart: that is the sadness. But, as our city cannot dispense with her literary amusements, he will be replaced by Hermegeistus: that is the joy."

"I suppose the two rhetoricians will speak one after the other, and thus we shall hear him who comes and him who goes?"

"Well guessed."

"Since you are so well informed in all that concerns Metrodorus, tell us why he leaves our city, where he has been wanting in neither sesterces nor applause."

"That is the enigma I am trying to solve."

"I could console myself for Metrodorus's departure were Thalia to remain with us; but she

will follow her father, and Arles will lose its most brilliant star."

"You, dear Albinus, have long suffered your muse to sleep. Now you have a subject calculated to inspire you: The Elegy of Thalia, the Waning Star."

"It is not I who will sing the most plaintive verses; Valerian is more afflicted than I."

"It is seldom that warriors allow themselves to be charmed by the beauties of rhetoric."

"Yet Mars has always entwined myrtle with his laurels."

Valerian did not join in their jests. On the contrary, his countenance showed a wish that they would change their conversation. Twilight was giving place to night. They returned to their homes, talking of the news from Rome and communicating their fears and hopes regarding a threatened war.





CHAPTER II.

METRODORUS, THE RHETORICIAN.

METRODORUS, the rhetorician, had adopted the customs of the Romans. Like them, he made the twelve hours of the day, from the rising of the sun to its setting, give place to those of the night. The first hour he gave to prayer. Sometimes he went to the Christian Church, to consecrate to the Lord the first fruits of the day ; but his was no fervent piety. It was as methodical and artificial as his discourses ; in it the mind had a greater share than the heart. During the second and third hours he made and received visits, heard his petitioners, or went himself to visit those great personages from whom he desired to obtain some favor. The fourth and fifth hours he devoted to labor. When too much fatigued to compose a discourse ; when his exhausted imagination was too slow in finding high-sounding epithets, periphrases, and happy expressions, he would go to hear the pleading, or gather the news on the Forum. The sixth hour invited him to rest ; it was the dinner-hour. The mid-day repast was not so frugal as formerly, but showed the progress of luxury, and could no longer be taken standing. Dinner was followed by the *siesta* — a short sleep which, ordinarily, was

not prolonged beyond an hour. After this sleep, the Romans did not attend to any serious affair; only very laborious men continued the work begun in the morning. They played at football or tennis, took a walk, or were carried in their litter. That was the time for the shows and popular games; for chariot-races in the circus, and mimical representations in the theatres. At the ninth hour, they went to the public baths. Even those who had private baths preferred, sometimes, to mingle with the crowd which filled those *thermæ*, constructed with so much magnificence by the Romans. The tenth hour called them to supper, the most important meal of the day. They ate slowly, giving themselves up to agreeable conversation. When guests were added to the ordinary family circle, the meal was often prolonged to the second and even third hour of the night. The couches on which they reclined during the repast served as beds of repose, and permitted them to converse at their ease. When no guests were present, they took a short walk after supper, and entertained themselves on family affairs, until their heavy eyes showed it was time to taste the delights of sleep. If they remained up longer than usual, the Romans took before sleep another slight repast, which they called *comessatio*.

On the tenth day before the calends of March, Metrodorus had invited to supper no guest except Hermegistus, who was soon to make his *début* in Arles as rhetorician. While awaiting the hour, he

retired with his daughter to his library, in which the oratorical works of Seneca and Dion of Prusa held the place of honor. Thalia was seated near the door, holding in her right hand an open volume; her left arm, resting on the table, supported her inclined head. Her countenance bore the traces of recent tears, and her long black tresses hung in disorder over her shoulders. Motionless and silent, she might have been taken for a statue of Melancholy. Metrodorus, walking slowly up and down, was committing to memory the discourse to be delivered three days later; but his daughter's sadness afflicted him. To distract her thoughts, he tried to engage her in a literary conversation; but she answered him only in monosyllables. Seating himself near her he said, in a voice tremulous with emotion:

"I thought you more philosophic, my dear child."

"The insensibility of the Stoics suits neither my age nor my sex."

"You ought to rejoice at the thought of seeing our native land again."

"I was but a child when we left Alexandria, and have but a vague remembrance of the city. This is my true country; here have been spent the happiest years of my youth."

"The banks of the Nile will soon make you forget those of the Rhone."

"We are ungrateful in thus leaving the city of Arles, where we have met with so much kindness.

The young men flock around your chair; your name is pronounced with admiration. They hasten from the neighboring cities to hear you. You will be as lost amidst the crowd of Alexandrian professors, while here you are the king of eloquence."

"I ought to forget my own glory and interests when my country calls me. A noble work is prepared,—it calls for a host of men of genius. Arius, my fellow-disciple and friend, is about to amaze the world by the grandeur of his conceptions. He has found the true philosophy of Christianity. He has conceived a system which simplifies all dogmas, and leads all to unity. He has discovered that which escaped the penetration of Origen himself. He has solved the problem of the relations of the world with God with more simplicity than the first Christian doctors, by drawing from the Gnostics and the Platonists of Alexandria their fundamental theory, despoiled of all superfluous hypotheses."

"What have we to do with his system? It will be like those that have preceded it. After having excited the people's minds for a while, it will pass away as a dream."

"The doctrine of Arius is not a system; it is the truth; the future belongs to it. But it has need of many friends to dissipate the false ideas that have hitherto prevailed."

"And it is to become a follower of Arius that you leave Gaul?"

"Here my sphere is too circumscribed. As a

disciple of Arius, to what may I not aspire? The rhetorician may become a bishop."

"In some ruined village of Africa."

"No; in one of the greatest cities of the East — Alexandria, Athens, Cæsarea, or Nicomedia."

"The East does not tempt me. To her most famous cities I prefer this dear Arles."

"You have no ambition."

"I have more, perhaps, than you, my father," said the young girl, proudly raising her head.

There was a momentary silence. Metrodorus arose and walked a few steps, with his eyes fixed on his manuscript, then he returned to Thalia.

"I have revealed to you all my projects; with the same frankness tell me your hopes."

"I hope for nothing, — not even to induce you to remain here. Your resolution is taken, your departure is announced."

"Think you I am ignorant of the chimera that attaches you to Arles?"

"What is it?" demanded the young girl, blushing.

"You think Valerian loves you."

"And you call that a dream!" cried Thalia.

"Yes; I believe, I am sure, I have inspired Valerian with the same sentiments with which he has inspired me. Yes; I am sure that he is as worthy of me as I am of him."

"I appreciate his noble qualities. He assuredly merits the esteem he enjoys; he has often honored my declamations with his presence. Nevertheless,

I did not think the daughter of a literary man would care so much for the homage of a soldier."

"Of a soldier, who may become emperor?"

Metrodorus started at the word. Then he added, smiling:

"Now I am obliged to confess you are more ambitious than I."

"Valerian is much beloved by Constantine. Why should he not some day proclaim him Cæsar? Have we not seen the imperial crown on the brow of a boor like Galerius; of the son of a slave like Diocletian?"

"For the future such freaks of fortune will be rare. No longer shall the caprice of the army or of the pretorian guards have the power to raise to the throne or deprive of it. The emperors will, themselves, choose their successors, and, henceforth, the empire will be hereditary."

Their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Hermegistus. When they had exchanged the usual compliments, Metrodorus introduced him into the *triclinium*. After a delicious supper, distinguished as much by the quality of the viands as by their abundance, they spoke of the approaching oratorical *début* of Hermegistus, who could not, without great emotion, think of the day of trial.

"If I were to be hissed," said he, "instead of being applauded, I should die of grief."

"Fear nothing. I leave you a devoted family, who will clap you with as much ardor as if it

were myself. Hygias, its chief, is very docile and intelligent. You will point out to him the beautiful parts of your discourse, and he will give the signal for applause at the suitable time."

"How shall I please an audience accustomed to your words, so elegant and so harmonious?"

"That is a fine compliment, and I will repay it at a suitable time. What is to be your subject?"

"I shall speak in praise of agriculture."

"I would have preferred it to be of navigation, fishing, or commerce. You must flatter the people of Arles, who cannot be skilful farmers. The Rhone brings them more than the Crau."

"I could not compose another in two days."

"After all, it does not matter what your subject be, so you introduce into your discourse a *proso-popœia* of the city of Arles.

"If we were at Athens, I would urge you to speak incidentally of Marathon. But here, to be heard favorably, you must proclaim Arles a second Rome, and recall the favors that have been lavished on it by Augustus and Julius Cæsar.

"I remember the advice which Lucien, that pitiless jester, gave a young orator: that 'Marathon and Cynegir should figure in all his discourses. You will say nothing worth while if you do not speak of Mount Athos and Hellespont; of the sun, hidden by the arrows of the Persians, as by a dark cloud; of the flight of Xerxes; of Leonidas at Thermopylæ; of Artemisia; of Salamis and Platea.'"

"Lucien may laugh, but his counsels are excellent. All nations are alike. If one wishes to please them, he must flatter, by incessantly reminding them of the most glorious events of their history."

"I have reserved for the peroration a panegyric of Constantine, which will, perhaps, be the most beautiful passage of my discourse."

"I was about to ask you if you had thought of the emperor. It is always prudent to praise those who govern us; but in this city, which owes so much to Constantine, you will do well to burn, from time to time, a few grains of incense in his honor. Let us esteem ourselves happy to live under a prince whom we may eulogize without going against our conscience. In former times, we would have had to laud the virtues of Nero, of Heliogabalus, or of Galerius."

"When I shall have sung the praises of Arles and the emperor, Heaven grant that the Arlesians may sing mine."

"Be persuaded that if you content their self-love, they will satisfy yours."

"What a humiliation, if, despite all the pains I take to polish my discourses, I find no auditors."

"It is impossible! What would the idlers do, now that there are no gladiatorial combats; that the chariot-races are so rare, the mimics contemned? They are only well pleased that the rhetoricians help them to pass away the time. I recommend one thing, however; that is, that you be punctual

to the hour appointed for the declamation. Let no indisposition prevent you from going to the theatre when the audience is assembled, and relies on you for amusement. Remember the sophist Niger. Some hours before the time for his discourse, he ate some fish, and a bone stuck in his throat. Unwilling to put off his discourse, lest it might seem an acknowledgment of defeat, he delivered it, but died a few days afterwards. He carried, even to contempt of death, his attachment to his rhetorical duties."

"I feel incapable of carrying to such heroism a love of glory."

"You need not here dread the tragic end of Niger. You will eat better fish and deliver better discourses."

At length arrived that eighth day before the calends of March, so pompously announced. Early in the morning Metrodorus's slaves were occupied in preparing the throne from which the two orators were to speak. It was fixed against the stage and overlooked the orchestra and the first benches. Over the throne the servants spread a silken canopy, and on the orator's seat and on the tribune they placed cushions, that he might not bruise his arms in making vehement gestures. Then they arranged commodious seats in the orchestra, that the auditors might be able to remain an hour without being fatigued.¹ Herme-

¹ Aelian said to Epictetus: "Mille poni subsellia oportebit et convocari quam plurimos auditores."

gistus would have wished to declaim in some other place besides the theatre, but it was not easy to rent a place large enough. Arles, unlike Athens, did not count among her citizens many of those benevolent men whose portrait Theophrastus has sketched as being always ready to place at the convenience of celebrated orators a sanded court, thus to display their wealth or literary tastes, as also to afford their friends the pleasure of a pompous oration. Metrodorus easily overcame the scruples of Hermegistus. He told him that orators must accommodate themselves to circumstances, and cited the example of Apuleius, who made no objection to declaiming in the theatre, where the mimic displayed his folly, the comedian harangued, the tragedian vociferated, the rope-dancer exposed his life, the buffoon gesticulated, or the prestidigitator showed his sleight-of-hand.

From the seventh hour the admirers of Metrodorus began to assemble in the seats and benches, and Albinus was not the last to take his place.

"Do you know why Metrodorus is going away?" he asked of his friend, the young Agathon, who sat near him.

"It is said that the Alexandrians have made magnificent proposals to him. However charmed orators may be with the brilliancy of eloquence, they do not despise the glitter of gold."

"He really ought to leave us his daughter Thalia. Orators are not scarce, and we shall always have them. *Uno avulso non deficit alter:*

No sooner does one go than another comes. But we shall not often meet with such transcendent beauty as that of Thalia."

"I am not as enthusiastic as you about that haughty Egyptian. She is deficient in grace, the most exquisite of all charms. She speaks with a haughty expression, has a domineering look, and a disdainful smile ever curls her lips. A sculptor might wish her for a model, but it is not I who would want her for a wife."

"Valerian is not of your opinion, and yet he has refined taste. As she is an orator's daughter, it is possible that her conversation is yet more fascinating than her looks. But since Valerian is enamored of this stranger, why does he let her depart?"

"I believe he is waiting, before asking her in marriage, to be raised to the rank of commander of a legion, or to receive the title of military count."

"The homage of a simple head of a battalion is not flattering enough. For that Cleopatra, one must at least be a triumvir."

The auditors, more numerous than usual, had already filled the greater number of the seats and half of the benches. Suddenly they rose to their feet, and filled the theatre with prolonged shouts of applause. Metrodorus entered smiling and saluting the public; he held by the hand Hermegistus, whose pallor betrayed his emotion. Behind him walked Thalia, surrounded by young girls of

her own age. All had adopted her style of head-dress. A large band of purple, fastened by a golden *agrafe*, confined their hair, and formed, as it were, a crown on their head. Metrodorus advanced to the orator's throne, casting on the auditory a satisfied look. Hermegistus seated himself on the chair nearest the throne, facing the people. Thalia and her companions had places reserved for them near the last corner of the benches. The choir of applauders entered after the young girls, and divided into two groups, Hygias, their chief, so placing himself that each could follow his movements and catch the slightest signal. Metrodorus came to the theatre in a chariot drawn by four Phrygian horses, with silver-mounted harness. He was as magnificently attired as the most celebrated rhetoricians. Like Adrien, master of the sophistical school of Athens, he wore a silken tunic, sparkling with precious stones; like Athenion, he had adorned his right hand with gold rings; and like Dion Chrysostom, he had thrown over his shoulders a lion-skin. Drawing near one of his most fanatical admirers, who was to be seen in the front rank at each declamation, that he might not lose a syllable, he said:

"Well, Florus, it seems we have a magnificent auditory to-day."

"There were never so many."

"There are nearly five hundred persons."

"What do you say? Five hundred? There are nearly a thousand."

"Dion himself never had so many."

"Proeresius would be envious of your success."

"I am surprised at such a concourse."

"Unless they were more illiterate than the boatmen of the Rhone, could they help coming to hear your elegant discourses?"

"The benches are not usually so full."

"They know you are about to leave us, and every one wishes to hear the last song of the swan."

Metrodorus seated himself on the throne with the air of one who is sure of his talent. He lavished his smiles and glances right and left, on those who had been his most assiduous hearers. As he was about raising his hand to impose silence, he perceived that Valerian had not arrived. Anxious for the presence of such an auditor, he tried to gain time by putting gum-drops into his mouth, to give his voice more sweetness and flexibility. Nevertheless, the silence of the assemblage warned him not to abuse their patience; but, just as he bowed to signify, according to custom, that he was about to speak, Valerian entered, followed by Cerealis, and seated himself on one of the first chairs of the orchestra, directly opposite those reserved to the young girls.

"Did you notice the looks exchanged between Thalia and the commander of our battalion?" demanded Agathon of his neighbor.

"The haughty beauty blushed slightly," responded Albinus.

"You see that even that piece of marble has life on certain occasions."

"Neither of them will pay much attention to the discourses we are about to hear."

"As for us, let us be all ears, since this is the last time we shall listen to Metrodorus."

"By Apollo! see Cerealis. At last, young sage, you understand that one can, without sin, hear our orator."

"Valerian has so warmly extolled his eloquence that I have resolved to judge for myself."

"If you have come to criticise, I pity the speaker."

"Hush; he begins."

Metrodorus's last declamation could not be other than a farewell address. His exordium was elegiac. In plaintive and tremulous tones he expressed his grief at leaving a city in which he had met with so much sympathy, and declared that never would he forget the city of Arles or the kindness of her inhabitants. He touched on the sadness of partings, with most ingenious antitheses, most beautiful combinations of subtile thoughts, clothed in words harmonious and aptly chosen; he was careful, above all, in his exordium, of what rhetoricians call *clausales*, that is to say the end of the phrase, that it should terminate, so to say, in steel points, thus to pierce his auditors and provoke their cries and plaudits.¹ More than once he was interrupted by

¹ Ne a me queras pueriles declamationes, sententiarum flosculos, verborum lenocinia et per fines capitulorum singularum acua quædam, breviterque conclusa, quæ plausis et clamores excitent audientium.—S. JEROM. Ep. 2.

acclamations, begun first by Hygias and repeated by crowds of auditors. "How beautiful!" "How good!" "Most just!" "That is divine!" "Bring crowns!"

Metrodorus went on to explain how he had resigned himself to a separation that rent his heart. His country, he said, called him. The word *country* afforded him an occasion for oratorical flourish.

"Where is the man so barbarous as to forget his country? For her we should live, for her we should die. She protected our cradle, she must overshadow our tomb. Let us be her strength in war, her glory in peace! Hers are our illustrious ancestors; hers, also, shall be our posterity. There day shines on us more brilliantly, there we sleep most calmly in the night. There we recall with greater happiness days gone by, and await with more lively hope the hours of the future. O my country! O natal skies! O land that beheld my birth! thy very name stirs the depths of my heart, and suffuses my eyes with tears. As a good son prefers his mother before all other women, so I, O maternal land! O my country! must prefer thee to other countries, however beautiful, however smiling, even to that in which I have passed my happiest days!"

Metrodorus remained seated while delivering his exordium, but when he reached this amplification on his country, the most effective part of his discourse, he arose, elevated his voice, and passing from graceful gestures to those the most vehement,

he beat his breast, clasped his hands or struck them violently together, and losing his voice, as it were, by the force of his enthusiasm, gave to his countenance an air of inspiration. When, panting and bathed in tears, he had ended this part of his discourse, he sank as if exhausted on his cushions. Hygias had awaited this moment to give the signal for the most vociferous clapping of hands. All those whom to-day we would call clappers, cried more loudly than ever, "*Crowns! Crowns!!*" and prolonging their clamors and applause, permitted the wearied orator to recover breath.

Returning to a more temperate style, he said that everything at Alexandria would force him to remember Arles. By the banks of the Nile, could he forget the waves of the Rhone? The deserts of Egypt and their celebrated mirage would remind him of the desert and mirage of Crau. After lavishing on this subject an interminable series of antitheses, he went on to predict a magnificent future reserved for the city of Arles. He showed that all cities destined to become celebrated had been built on a river. He spoke of Babylon traversed by the Euphrates; of Nineveh watered by the Tigres; of Athens, whose fields were fertilized by the Cephissus and Ilissus; of Rome, the bases of whose seven hills rested on the Tiber. The nymphs of the Rhone may meet the nymphs of the Nile beneath the blue waves of the Mediterranean; but the Dryads, inhabitants of the forests that lie to the north of the plains of Arles, prefer that sojourn to

all other sacred woods. In vain does Pan call them to the oaks of Dodona or the cypresses of Nemea; never will they quit the harmonious pines of the forest of Arles.

These allusions were received with loud applause and cries of enthusiasm.

“What an harmonious voice!” said one.

“What distinct and agreeable enunciation!” said another.

“What rhythmical and measured oratory!”

Standing on tiptoe, Metrodorus cast around him glances of satisfaction. When silence was reëstablished, he assumed the attitude of a man overwhelmed with grief, and his peroration took the tone of an elegy.

“Farewell, hospitable city! last refuge of eloquence! Farewell, city dear to the most illustrious of princes—to the divine Constantine; farewell, incomparable city, in which have been spent my happiest days! O new Rome, may the Fates be propitious to thee! Happy they who have known thee; happy they who, after a mournful absence, return to the banks of thy beautiful river; happier still they who never leave thy green fields, thy azure skies, who may dwell beneath the shadow of thy amphitheatre, and sleep their last sleep in thy Elysian fields!”

As he uttered these words he raised his hand to his eyes, as if to dry his tears, and slowly and with seeming regret, descended from the tribune. His adieux could not have been more artfully made.

His pretended emotion produced a lively effect on the audience, some of whom shed tears; and more vociferous than ever was the applause that greeted so moving a peroration.

As soon as Metrodorus left the chair, Florus ran to him, and seizing the border of his mantle, kissed it, exclaiming in transport:

"Master, master, it is not a man whom we have heard; it is Mercury; it is Apollo; it is the god of persuasion!"

"Truly, you have found me eloquent to-day?"

"Admirable! prodigious! You have never been so eloquent."

"What say you to the way in which I introduced Pan, the nymphs, and the dryads?"

"Nothing more ingenious could be imagined. Let us hear no more about Socrates and Demosthenes."

"In truth, I believe that part was a perfect success."

"After you, we can never hear any one else with pleasure."

"And why? Hermegistus, certainly, has not my power, but he speaks well enough."

While Metrodorus was thus relishing the incense of flattery, Albinus said to his neighbor:

"By Pollux, my dear Agathon, I believe the orator is mocking us! He does not mean a word of what he says, or he would not think of quitting Arles."

"What do we care about the orators' thoughts,

provided their language be agreeable? Their aim is not to speak their convictions, but to discourse in spirited phrases and well-chosen words which delight the ear. They invite us to their discourses as to an amusement, of which they bear all the expense. Do we ask an actor if he means what he says when he declaims a tragic soliloquy?"

"Metrodorus is too proud of his oratorical efforts. I excused his vanity while he was content with our applause; but since he goes to seek that of the Alexandrians, I would like to humble his self-love a little."

"We should have hissed him in the middle of his peroration."

"He well deserved it. But they would have cried out on all sides: 'Out with the traitor!' and I should probably have been obliged to leave the theatre."

"I would have followed you, but we would not leave without giving the people some of our eloquence."

"There is an excellent way of giving him, without danger to ourselves, a lesson he will not forget. He has tried to-day to win a triumph. He thinks his adieux have moved us, and that Hermegistus will be but coolly received. Why should we not applaud him who comes as much as him who goes? Hermegistus is about to speak. Let us clap him in such a way as to prove to Metrodorus that we prefer his successor's eloquence to his."

"The idea is good, and easily carried out."

Hermegistus, in turn, ascended the tribune Metrodorus had just quitted. The soft cushions on which his hands rested, the canopy extended over his head, the audience ranged in semicircles before him, awaiting his words in a silence which intimidated him,—everything was new to him. His countenance was pale, his hands trembling, and his downcast eyes dared not regard his audience with a bold glance; nevertheless, he made gracefully the usual salutations, and began in a clear voice, which would have been sonorous had not emotion rendered it somewhat tremulous.

“I had long believed that to speak magnificently one must be in Athens, and that the Athenians alone could appreciate the delicacy of beautiful language; but, seeing with what intelligence, with what an appreciation of literary merit you have listened to the words of a master of the art of speaking, I am convinced that purity of taste is not the peculiar privilege of the Greeks, and that your blessed country thrills as deeply as the land of Demosthenes when she hears the voice of eloquence.”

Although this entrance on his subject was in no wise marvellous, Albinus and Agathon clapped their hands with all their might, crying out: “*Well done! well done! Crowns! Welcome to Hermegistus!*” Cerealis and Valerian followed their example, and in a moment the whole audience joined in the cry: “*Welcome to Hermegistus!*” Surprised at the effect produced, and encouraged by such a kindly recep-

tion, the orator continued his discourse in a more confident tone. He said, that if he were speaking in a city whose inhabitants knew the wealth derived from the culture of the earth, he would expatiate on the advantages of commerce; but, being in the great city of Arles, renowned for the extent of her trade, he must be allowed to speak in praise of agriculture. Here he was interrupted by the plaudits of Albinus and Agathon:

"That is admirable!"

"You could not have chosen a better subject."

"Agriculture is the true wealth of a nation."

Metrodorus was at a loss to explain the success of Hermegistus. He had clapped his hands with the others after the first few phrases; but now he began to fear that his successor would eclipse him. "And yet," said he to himself, "I make more finished periods than he. He employs old-fashioned words, and seems not to know how to adapt his sentences to the prevailing fashion. He has none of those ingenious periphrases which resemble enigmas, and give the audience the additional pleasure of divining what the orator means."

Hermegistus's discourse was neither better nor worse than the ordinary declamations of the rhetoricians. His style was less ambiguous than that of the sophists of his time, but his ideas did not rise above the platitudes of the oratorical trifling. He first related the origin of agriculture, and failed not to do honor to the cultivation of corn by Ceres and Triptolimos, and to allude to Minerva's bestowing

the olive on Attica. These pagan reminiscences were not remarkable for their novelty, but Albinus and Agathon, determined to applaud, did not exact original thoughts.

"Honor to Hermegistus! he is fed on the poesy of Homer."

"He is a worthy son of Athens, the city of Pallas!"

These exclamations, followed by prolonged applause, were repeated by the crowd. Metrodorus was cut to the heart by the sharp tooth of jealousy. What! a novice more successful than he? Leaning towards Florus, while the people were clapping their hands, he said:

"See what becomes of my glory! That young man has to-day eclipsed me. Who would have thought it?"

"He is not worthy to write under your dictation. I am surprised to see him so much admired. He talks just like everybody else, and employs not a single refined or subtile phrase. The stupidity of this audience makes me blush."

"Those who go are always wrong."

"But those who come are not always right, as you shall see."

Florus wrote a few words on his tablets and caused them to be passed from hand to hand to Hygias, the chief of Metrodorus's applauders or clappers.

Hermegistus, after having presented agriculture as the best gift of the gods, showed that it was also

the greatest happiness of man. He first drew a series of comparisons to prove that the farmer is the happiest of mortals. He compared his peaceable life with the agitated life of the mariner, the soldier, or the merchant. "The lot of the monarch himself," added he, "is not so enviable as that of the farmer. The latter, after the labors of the day, sleeps tranquilly; but the rest of the former is broken by anxiety. The one sees around him only friends; the other is ever in dread of his enemies. The first bears a merry heart in a robust body; the other is incessantly tortured by the heavy cares which consume him. Ah! how fortunate are the laborers!"

"If they knew their happiness!" interrupted Albinus. "Very good! very good!"

"Honor to him who so elegantly mingles the poesy of Virgil with that of Homer!"

The voices of the two friends were drowned by those of Hygias and the choir under his direction.

"Bad! pitiable! absurd! baked apples!"

These unexpected recriminations raised a great tumult, and the audience became divided into two parties. That of Hygias, though less numerous, was not less noisy.

"We do not want the poets brought in everywhere."

"Poesy is the sister of Eloquence."

"Hermegistus cannot succeed Metrodorus."

"Hermegistus speaks better than Metrodorus."

"Out with the flatterers!"

“To the door with the envious!”

Tempers were becoming hotter and replies more violent, when Valerian arose, extended his hand to enforce silence, and in the tone of one accustomed to command, bade the auditory allow the orator to proceed.

Hygias, who professed a great respect for armed force, said not a word more, while Albinus reserved his last manifestations for the end of the discourse. Hermegistus concluded his eulogy on agriculture by saying that it could render men happy only when peace should reign over the earth. He added that “the reign of Constantine would assure to the world that blessing of peace so long desired, and would banish from the provinces of the empire the terrible scourge of war.

“He would bring back the golden age of Saturn and Rhea, and oppose an impassable barrier against the barbarians who threaten the frontiers. Thanks to him, the Christians, so much persecuted during three centuries, were now to know the benefits of peace. Henceforth they could openly exercise their religion, without fear of being punished with death for having adored the true God. . . .”

On hearing the praise of Constantine, Valerian was the first to give the signal for applause. Hygias made it a duty to show his zeal for the reigning prince; even Florus thought himself obliged to join the popular voice.

“Long life to the divine Constantine, the protector of Arles!”

"Long life to Hermegistus, who has so worthily praised our young Augustus!"

"Let us escort his litter, and accompany him even to his dwelling," said Albinus.

"Yes; let us render the homage due to his eloquence!" exclaimed the crowd.

In vain did Hermegistus endeavor to refer the triumph to Metrodorus, by declaring himself only the humble disciple of that illustrious master. Albinus and Agathon, at the head of a numerous *cortège*, surrounded his litter, which was slowly carried through the Forum and the principal streets of Arles. Nor did they leave him until, having entered his house, he was borne by his slaves to a couch, on which he extended himself, exhausted by the emotions of the day. Before taking their departure, they once again raised the triumphal cry:

"To Hermegistus be the palm of eloquence!"

Albinus had attained his end—the profound humiliation of Metrodorus. The unfortunate rhetorician, seeing the unexpected triumph of his successor, could not conceal his poignant grief. His clinched hand crushed the papyrus on which he had transcribed his discourse, but to which he had not once referred, so wonderful was his memory. From his compressed lips no sound escaped; while his eyes, no longer casting triumphant glances on the assembly, remained sadly fixed on the ground. He was accompanied home by only a few of his admirers, such as Florus, and by Hygias and the troop of applauders, who feared to lose their pay.

On arriving at his door, he dismissed, with a disdainful gesture, this little group, who had scarcely dared, with forced enthusiasm, to raise the shout:

"Honor to the prince of eloquence! Arles is about to lose her greatest light! His departure will be a public loss!"

Those acclamations, which awoke no echo, far from healing the wound inflicted on the rhetorician's self-love, did but inflame it.

When alone, he gave full vent to his jealousy; while his daughter, her eyes filled with tears of anger, hung upon his neck. The haughty Thalia was as deeply irritated as her father at the success of Hermegistus.

"Let us leave immediately, my daughter, this ungrateful city; let us fly from these stupid Gauls, who cannot appreciate talent."

"Alexandria will be more just to you."

"It is a wise city which knows how to honor the art of speaking."

"Nevertheless, we leave here some devoted friends who admire your eloquence."

"On the morrow of our departure they will not remember us."

"There are some who will never forget us."

"Doubtless, you are thinking of Valerian; but was it not he that imposed silence on Hygias, when he was about to interrupt the unjust applause by well-deserved criticisms?"

"Could he do otherwise? Was he not bound to quell the tumult and restore order."

About nightfall, Valerian himself came to prove to Thalia how much reason she had to count on the fidelity of his affection. Presenting to Metrodorus a crown of gold, he said:

"Permit me, in the name of your habitual auditors, to offer you this testimony of admiration. Accept it as a souvenir of your sojourn amongst us. Bear it with you to the land of Egypt, and let it remind you of the happy hours we have spent in listening to you."

"Alas! those who crowded around my chair, will listen to Hermegistus with such pleasure that they will not regret me."

"Be not deceived by the more than kindly applause which to-day greeted the first discourse of your successor; first efforts must be encouraged with great kindness. But even those who carried farthest their politeness to the new-comer, have measured the distance between his talent and yours."

Valerian's words fell like soothing balm on the rhetorician's wounded feelings. His vanity could not resist the temptation to place upon his brow the crown of leaves of gold fastened by a purple bandelet, on which were embroidered, in white wool, the flattering words:

"TO THE ILLUSTRIOUS METRODORUS, FROM THE GRATEFUL INHABITANTS OF ARLES."

What tenderness was in the glance with which Thalia thanked Valerian for his delicate attention. How great was the happiness she experienced

during the closing hours of that day, after the divers emotions which pride and anger had, by turns, raised in her heart.

"When do you leave us?" asked Valerian.

"We shall embark the day after to-morrow, on a vessel which, descending the Rhone, will take us to Marseilles. There we must wait for the first ship bound for Alexandria."

"Allow me to accompany you to Marseilles. I may, perhaps, be able to render less painful the last few days you are to spend in Gaul. I know well the various attractions which Marseilles presents to the curious traveller, for I spent there the earlier years of my life. My father, too, has resided there since the term of his military career; he will be most happy to receive you."

Thalia awaited, with anxiety, her father's reply; it was conformable to her desires.

"I shall be most happy to receive on board the ship that is to bear me back to my own country, the farewells of such a friend as you."

After Valerian's departure, Thalia expressed her joy to her father.

"What a happy voyage we shall have. . . . Can you still doubt the affection of that noble heart? Are you surprised at the sentiments with which it inspires me?"

"Valerian is sensible to the charms of eloquence. May he one day be emperor."

"And you, my father, may you be a bishop."



CHAPTER III.

A CENTURION IN RETREAT.

ON the occasion of his departure, Metrodorus found no cause to complain of the citizens of Arles, who congregated in immense numbers on the banks of the Rhone near Constantine's bridge, where was moored the vessel that was to bear to Marseilles the rhetorician and his daughter. Foremost among them stood Hermegistus, who, unelated by his triumph, wished to express, for the last time, his gratitude to him who had initiated him into the rhetorical art, and had introduced him to the chair of Arles, in which he hoped to obtain brilliant success. Hygias, who had already offered his services to the new master, was there, surrounded by his troop, ready to make the air resound with a last thunder of applause in honor of Metrodorus. Florus, too, was willing to join the noise of his vigorous hands to that of the professional clappers. Albinus and Agathon, satisfied with the success of their plot, had not come to give a second lesson to the rhetorician. Feeling they had sufficiently humbled him, they now came to salute him on his departure. Metrodorus and Thalia, as they drew near the river, had to pass through a vast crowd, which rent the air with applauding cries; when

they had entered their vessel the plaudits were redoubled.

"Hail, O most eloquent of men!"

"May Neptune protect thy voyage!"

"Mayst thou be borne upon the waves as was Simon Peter!"

Thalia, too, had a large share in the flattering acclamations, which momentarily increased until Valerian went aboard the vessel.

"Hail, O wisest and most beautiful of maidens!"

"On beholding thee, the sea will take thee for the goddess who sprang from the sea-foam!"

"The sailors will think that the fair Galatea is on their ship!"

Valerian gave the signal for departure; the bark, detached from her moorings, floated on the current of the river, guided by a skilful pilot and two robust rowers. The surprise was extreme when it was seen that Valerian was accompanying the travellers.

"Is he, also, leaving us to follow the beautiful Thalia even to Egypt?" asked one of the crowd.

Albinus, who knew that Valerian often went to Marseilles to see his father, was less surprised than the others.

"He will not leave Metrodorus," said he to Agathon, "until he sees him on board the vessel that is to take him to Egypt."

"If Metrodorus were alone, Valerian would not take the trouble to escort him to Marseilles."

"Since fate is about to separate him from Thalia,

is it not natural that he should avail himself of the last few moments they may spend together?"

"They will meet again. They love each other too much not to be reunited."

"Valerian is high enough in Constantine's favor to be one day appointed prefect of Egypt, or, at least, military governor of Alexandria."

"I would prefer him to remain with us."

"Try to find among the ladies of Arles, so famous for their beauty, a young girl who may cause him to forget Thalia."

"I much fear that the Egyptian has given him a magical philter."

"Do you not know that incantations have no power over Christians?"

The crowd began to disperse, for the bark had disappeared from the sight of the curious gazers, who, stationed on the bridge, watched it as long as it remained above the horizon.

Little does Valerian care what reflections his friends make on his absence, as, with feelings of mingled joy and bitterness, he gazes on the young maiden who is leaving Gaul never to return to it. When shall he see her again? how hold communication with her? The secrets of the future are impenetrable, yet his heart tells him their separation is not to be eternal. Willingly would he prolong the delight of the present hour, and he regrets that their bark is wafted onward with such rapidity. Why can he not cast anchor, or retard the current of the stream?

Thalia, too, is enraptured with the voyage, and her eyes sparkle with joy, as, abandoning to the mercy of the breeze her raven tresses, she inhales with delight the air already impregnated with the saline odors of the sea. Fain would she, too, retard the course of time, that she may longer meet the ardent glances of Valerian, may longer hear the accents of his loved voice.

As the Rhone flows through vast marshy plains, the scenery along its banks is very monotonous; no hilly undulations relieve the eye, which beholds everywhere the same low land, the same scanty verdure, the same barren aspect. But to Valerian and Thalia those desolate solitudes are as beautiful as the most fertile plantations; seeing but themselves in those sterile lands, the sand-wastes, the reeds and rushes, the scanty tufts of grass that meet their eye, seem to them enchantingly lovely.

Metrodorus has taken his tablets to inscribe thereon a beautiful thought that occurs to his mind, and which he fears to lose. The rapidity of the Rhone in its seaward course reminds him of the precipitate rush of our lives towards the portals of death; and, in the comparison, he finds an agreeable series of antitheses, which he judges will give additional beauty to the first discourse he shall deliver.

In the meantime, Thalia and Valerian, surrendering themselves to the rapture of the hour, speak of their memories and their hopes. Promising mutually never to forget, they bind themselves to

a regular correspondence until that happy hour when they shall be reunited never more to part.

Yes, let your hearts speak now while they are as limpid as the flow of the river. Too soon, perhaps, the tempest may raise from their depths slime that will sully their purity. Profit by these peaceful moments, when all is harmony between you. Who knows whether some fatal discord may not prevent that joyous hymeneal union of which you dream? You have sworn fidelity to your mutual love; but you know not the trials that await you in the future. You never dream of promising to remain in the same faith.

Metrodorus was not so deeply enamored of rhetoric as to lose all interest in affairs of this world. The words of his daughter, that she did not despair of one day seeing Valerian on the throne, gave him food for reflection, and he seemed to see her adorned with the imperial crown. Was not Constantine's mother the daughter of an inn-keeper? What woman could be found more worthy than Thalia of bearing a sceptre? Nevertheless, in conversing with Valerian, he dissembled his hopes.

"The rhetorician's profession is not as profitable as the soldier's," said he, closing his tablets. "We no longer live in the times when arms had to yield to the toga. The epic is no longer the path to the highest dignities."

"When Constantine becomes master of the East

and the West, he will bring the fine arts again into repute."

"The empire is too much extended. It can no longer obey one master."

"On the contrary, we have now, more than ever, need of unity of government. If we divide our strength we cannot resist the barbarians."

"Nevertheless, the custom has been adopted. Henceforth there will always be several emperors, and the imperial purple will be awarded to the most valiant generals."

"The division of power is but of recent date. Diocletian, on ascending the throne, saw how great was the difficulty of governing alone the vast provinces of the empire, and defending its threatened frontiers. He also knew, from experience, with what facility a legion of soldiers or a cohort of pretorian guards made and unmade emperors. Raised to the throne by military despotism, he tried to accomplish what Augustus, raised to it by the people, had not done, — that is, to fix the rule of succession, and give the emperor the right to choose his successor, without the interference of the army. He first invested Maximian with a share of the sovereign power, and to him he gave the title of Augustus. Then he created two Cæsars — Constantius Chlorus and Galerius. Upon the death of either of the emperors, one of the Cæsars was to succeed to his title and authority, and to create, also, as his successor, a new Cæsar. Thus the empire had four heads."

“Is it not evident that those four heads could more easily defend the provinces threatened by the barbarians?”

“Diocletian sacrificed the future to the exigency of the moment. By creating, so to speak, four kingdoms out of one empire, he prepared the way for the dismemberment of that Roman power which it had taken ten centuries to build up. Diocletian learned, to his cost, the consequences of the order of succession he had established; for he and his colleague Maximian were obliged to abdicate by Galerius, greedy of power. Constantius Chlorus and Galerius became emperors; Severus and Maximian Daia were proclaimed Cæsars.

“There had always been four heads. Such a system of government was required by circumstances. One man could not command the whole world. We should desire that there be always four emperors, that a crown may be given to those worthy to bear it.

“Unfortunately, a fifth head suddenly appeared in Italy. Maxentius, the son of Maximian, irritated at not having been appointed Cæsar, proclaimed himself emperor. Severus marched against him, and was killed. Galerius proclaimed Licinius Cæsar, and assembled a numerous army, but on arriving before Rome he was terrified at the immensity of the Eternal City. Hastening back to Nicomedia, he there died, covered with putrid sores and devoured by worms, which did not

deter the pagans from ranking him among the gods.

"They acted according to tradition; for, since the time of Augustus, all the emperors had become gods by dying. Their apotheosis was the occasion on which the most famous orators displayed all their eloquence.

"As neither Maximian nor Licinius wished to go to war with Maxentius, they would willingly have recognized him as emperor, in place of Galerius. Constantine, also, was unwilling to attack the son of Maximian, the former colleague of his father; but he soon learned that the stupid tyrant had caused his statues to be thrown down. After such an insult, he could no longer hesitate."

"Were you with the army that fought against Maxentius?"

"I had that honor. I was then only a centurion; but Constantine deigned to notice me more than other gallant men, and named me chief of a troop. Our young emperor found himself at the head of a valiant and well-disciplined army, the majority of whom were Christians. The piety of his mother was well known; and it was a recognized fact that, although his father had not declared openly for the new religion, he had, nevertheless, secretly protected it; hence the Christian soldiers, persecuted in the rest of the empire, had come to take refuge in the army of Gaul. In marching on Rome with legions animated by the remembrance of St. Maurice, St. Victor, and so many other martyred soldiers, Con-

stantine already felt a presentiment of his destiny, —a miraculous vision established it beyond a doubt. To his eyes, and those of his whole army, there appeared, one day, about noon, a luminous cross over the sun, with the words: 'In this sign thou shalt conquer.' Encouraged by that vision which revealed to him Christ as the true conqueror of the world, he caused a monogram of the first letters of the Greek name of our Saviour to be inscribed on the labarum of the soldiers. When our army met that of Maxentius, on the banks of the Tiber, it was for the decisive combat between Christianity and Paganism. We all felt we were fighting for our altars; hence nothing could resist the superhuman courage that transported us. The cross was victorious; Maxentius flung himself into the Tiber. His head, fixed on a pike, was carried around our ramparts. The people and the senate, thus delivered from frightful tyranny, welcomed Constantine as a savior. Rome, formerly sacked by the sons of pagan Gaul, now owed her liberty to the sons of Christian Gaul. It was the first time that an army from our shores carried salvation to Rome; it is not to be the last."

"I admire with you the military genius of Constantine, but it seems to me that after his victory over Maxentius, he should have been more generous, and have appointed a successor to Galerius. The order established by Diocletian should have been maintained, and the empire have still had four heads.

“Does not the conduct of Maximian Daia prove that, of the three heads that remained, there was, at least, one too many? Constrained to publish an edict of liberty in favor of the Christians, whom he detested, did he not persecute them immediately afterwards with unprecedented ferocity? Did he not, adding calumny to cruelty, distribute through towns and villages innumerable most shameful pamphlets against the Christians? As emperors ever find ambitious flatterers and courtiers ready to work their will, the Christians subject to Maximian would undoubtedly have perished in a general massacre, had not God punished the tyrant and his accomplices by delivering them up to the most terrible of scourges, famine and pestilence. The streets of large cities were filled with corpses; the country itself was no shelter from the contagion, while those whom the pestilence spared ran hither and thither, seeking in vain for food, until they sank exhausted, exclaiming: ‘I die of hunger! I die of hunger!’ Then was the power of charity displayed in the Christians, for, repaying by good the evil their enemies had done them, they spent their days in giving nourishment to the famishing, in aiding the sick and burying the dead.

“Maximinus became the champion of Paganism, believing that his false deities would, on the field of battle, avenge the defeat of Pont Milvius. He hoped to overcome Licinius and Constantine in turn, and again to impose on the Christians that oppressive yoke which had weighed so heavily

upon them before the promulgation of the edict of liberty.

"But being twice vanquished by Licinius, unable to outlive the shame of defeat, he took poison, and the horrible tortures that preceded his death were the just chastisement of his crimes.

"I rejoiced at the tyrant's death, but Licinius seems to me as ambitious as Constantine, for he has appointed no successor to Maximian, so that, instead of the four emperors appointed by Diocletian, we have but two, who with difficulty endure a divided sovereignty. Each would wish to reign alone, and on the first pretext they will fight for the empire of the world.

"Be assured that Constantine will not commence hostilities. As to Licinius, it is possible he may allow himself to be seduced by the pagans, and led to believe that by relying on the partisans of the old religion, he will be able to conquer the defender of the Christians. I hope he will be so imprudent as to take up arms, for it would be the last effort of expiring Paganism. Licinius will be vanquished, and the empire will have the happiness of being governed by Constantine alone."

"However able the prince may be, he will need assistants. Who knows whether you may not one day command in Gaul with the title of Cæsar or even Augustus."

"May my father's desire become a prediction!" exclaimed Thalia, who exulted with joy at the prospect of so glorious a future.

"Gaul is too great for me," replied Valerian, smiling. "The government of a city is all that I could desire; and, if it were permitted me to choose, that city should be Alexandria."

While the rhetorician and his daughter were thus conversing with Valerian, their bark had reached the spot where the yellowish current of the Rhone mingles with the blue waters of the Mediterranean. The sea was calm, not a breath of air rippled its surface. The rowers bent over their oars, and the bark sped swiftly over the waves. Soon the travellers could discern in the distance the lofty towers of the citadel of Marseilles and the mountain that overlooks it, bearing on its stony sides some old oaks which had escaped the axes of Julius Cæsar's soldiers.

Marseilles, which time and the hand of man, far more destructive than time, have so often ruined, yet which ever rises more beautiful and flourishing from its ashes, was not as populous in the fourth century as in the time of Julius Cæsar. When, after a glorious resistance, it yielded to the conqueror of Pompey, he left two legions, that is to say, ten or twelve thousand soldiers, to garrison its citadel. Had not its population been considerable, it would not have required so many soldiers to keep it in submission. In 314, Marseilles was no longer an independent city, governed, as in former times, by a council of six hundred fathers of families, appointed for life. When the emperors brought it under the new order of things, they did not dream

of compensating it for the loss of its liberty by sumptuous edifices. Neither did they fix their residence there; they had already chosen other cities of Gaul. Arles was then the most important city of the province, and enjoyed all the imperial favors.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of the fourth century, Marseilles was a vast city, proud of its admirable structure, its solidity and beauty, open, either by land or sea, to the commerce of all nations. Built upon a peninsula, united to the continent by a neck of land of about fifteen hundred paces, it was bounded by the sea on three sides, while across that which united it to the land there extended a thick wall flanked by towers, protected by a fosse and defended by a citadel. Rocks rose around its port, then called Lacydon. Its form was somewhat circular, and the entrance to it hardly wide enough to allow the passage of large vessels. As much of the land on which ancient Marseilles stood has been swept away by the sea, it is impossible now to trace the form or indicate the site of the peninsula and the Lacydon mentioned by ancient geographers.

Valerian, usually so joyful whenever he visited his native city, felt sadness stealing over his heart, as their bark entered the port of Marseilles. The moment that is to separate him from Thalia is at hand. How delightful, yet how short, has been the voyage during which he has enjoyed her dear presence. She is about to cross other seas; but

not by his side. How Alexandria will welcome her return; but, oh, will she preserve the purity of her soul in that wealthy city, where the luxury and effeminacy of the East are allied to the literary taste and disputing mind of Greece? Why can he not follow her into Egypt, and preserve her from all fatal influence?

Thalia is as deeply affected as Valerian, and her bosom heaves with sighs when she thinks of the approaching farewell. Ah, if all life could be like the last two days which have flown so rapidly by! She bears in her heart an image that shall never be effaced, but shall she be long regretted? Does not absence beget forgetfulness? If Valerian be called to higher rank, will he still think of her who first woke the tender affections of his soul?

Metrodorus shared in his daughter's anxiety; but he gave no outward sign of the emotions that agitated his soul. Hence, his first care after their arrival, was to inquire if there were in port any vessels ready to sail to Egypt. He was shown a Phœnician galley, which the sailors had just covered with bitumen. He hastened to take passage therein; but the pilot informed him the vessel would not sail for three days. Valerian would have preferred a delay of three months; nevertheless, his sadness was dissipated by the thought of spending three more blissful days with Thalia.

"Permit me," said he to Metrodorus, "to offer you hospitality, in my father's name, during your short stay in our city."

"I accept most willingly, if, by so doing, I shall not intrude. On the eve of parting from a faithful friend, could I be otherwise than delighted at receiving his last testimonies of affection?"

"My father's house is large enough for your accommodation. The nurse who attended me in my childhood will introduce your daughter into the *gynceea*, which has been vacant since my mother's death."

Victorinus, Valerian's father, was an old soldier; but his snowy beard was the only sign that revealed his age. His limbs were strong and vigorous, and his manly form still unbent by the weight of years. He had been a centurion in the army raised by Maximian Hercules to fight against the Bagaudæ, partisans for the independence of Gaul, and to exterminate the Christians; hence he had been a witness of the massacre of the Thebean Legion.

That legion, composed wholly of Christians, had come from the East to join the army, which it did at Octodurum, on the frontiers of Gaul. They encamped near Agaunum, in a valley of the Alps, some leagues from Geneva. There it was that Maximian, by a refinement of cruelty, ordered the Christian legion to massacre the Christians. The magnanimous soldiers replied: "We have come from the East, not to be executioners, but to gain victories." Irritated at their resistance, Maximian ordered them to be twice decimated; but they preferred to be slain themselves rather than imbrue

their hands in innocent blood. Far from assuming the defensive, they meekly bowed their heads beneath the sword of the executioner, happy to give their lives for the glory of Jesus Christ. The entire legion fell beneath the sword.

Victorinus could not without horror behold the unjust massacre of his companions in arms. When Maximian went to Marseilles, there to kindle the flame of persecution, Victorinus, whose term of military service was expired, asked and obtained his discharge. Retiring to a villa situated upon the sea, he devoted his time to fishing and the cultivation of his garden. Although he himself was a pagan, he had espoused a Christian lady, whose gentle virtues obliged him to acknowledge the moral power of the new religion. The heroism of the Thebean legion gave him a lively sense of the vanity of idolatry and the sublimity of Christianity. The martyrdom of St. Victor, the details of which he closely followed, completed the conquest; he entered himself among the catechumens, and was baptized. The neophyte, in the ardor of his zeal, tried to animate his son with a faith as ardent as his own, and Valerian's piety amply repaid his father's tenderness.

More than once, in his letters, had Valerian spoken to his father of Metrodorus and Thalia, and the praises he had lavished on the daughter revealed the sentiments of his heart. Victorinus was naturally anxious to see her who, in all probability, should be one day his son's wife; hence he

was delighted to learn from a messenger whom Valerian had dispatched in haste, that she had arrived in Marseilles, and would spend with him the three days previous to her departure. Victorinus received his guests with the utmost cordiality.

"Welcome to the house of an old soldier," said he to the rhetorician. "He is more accustomed to the rude language of the camp than to polished phrases, but his friends have never accused him of being wanting in devotedness."

"We know no more generous soul than Valerian, and you prove to us the truth of the proverb, 'Like father, like son.'"

"Daphne, formerly my slave and now my servant, will be happy to render to your daughter all the good offices she may desire."

"I wish for nothing," replied Thalia, "except that we may have an opportunity of rendering you in Alexandria some return for your hospitality."

"I am too old to travel, but Valerian may yet have to cross the sea. A soldier goes wherever his master sends him, and it is possible my son may be, at some time, sent to Egypt."

"He shall find there a second father," replied Metrodorus.

"If God wills that he find there a spouse, I shall not oppose him."

The next day Victorinus and his son took their guests through the city. They could show them no monument comparable to the theatre and am-

phitheatre of Arles, but the citadel was worthy of a visit. The lofty towers that defended the wall separating the city from the continent, reminded them of the most beautiful Roman constructions. Valerian begged his father to show Metrodorus the prison in which St. Victor had been confined, and the place where he had suffered martyrdom. Victorinus conducted them to the Forum of the upper city, overlooked by the citadel. Thence they descended into the military quarters.

"Behold," said he to them, "a true Roman barracks. It resembles all those I have seen in divers cities. These rooms, almost square, are contiguous to one another, but entirely separate. They have a southern aspect, and this vast corridor shelters them from the chilly influence of the north wind. On this side is the principal store-house of the *dendrophores*, who trade in the wood employed in the construction of engines of war. Farther on you perceive the store-house of the *centonaires*, who furnish the soldiers with tents and equipments. But here is what will, undoubtedly, most deeply interest you — I mean the prisons."

Being commander of a troop, Valerian easily obtained from the soldiers who guarded the prisons permission to show his guests through them.

"Take notice," said Victorinus, "of this little quadrilateral cave, which can be entered only through this narrow opening, which allows us to see the great thickness of the wall. It is the darkest and most frightful of all the prison cells,

but to us Christians, it is a sacred spot, for here St. Victor was imprisoned."

"I remark," said Metrodorus, "that the Romans were accustomed to build their prisons near the public places. The Mamertine prison in Rome is at the entrance of the Forum, near the Capitol.

"As the Romans spent their lives, so to say, in the Forum, the prisons were placed under their daily view, that they might be deterred from the crimes which were there punished."

"Was it not near here," asked Valerian, "that St. Victor caused baptism to be given to the soldiers charged to guard him, and who were converted at the sound of his voice?"

"This street leads to the spot where the jailors became Christians. One night, while Victor was in prison, his dungeon was illumined with celestial brightness, its gloomy portals opened of themselves, and angels entered to console the soldier of Christ. Dazzled by the unexpected brightness, Victor's guards felt that they had offended the Divinity by becoming accomplices of the persecutor of the Christians. Prostrating themselves at the martyr's feet, they implored his pardon, and begged for baptism. He hastened to instruct them as far as circumstances permitted, gave notice to the priests who continually watched about the prison, conducted them that night to the sea-coast, accompanied them into the water, and drew them forth when they were baptized. Do you see this rock with the semi-circular excavation made by the sea? There it was

that Victor's three jailors, the soldiers Alexander, Longinus, and Felician were baptized."

Victorinus led his guests from the sea back to the Forum by another way.

"Here we are before the temple of Delphic Apollo, to whom the pagans of Marseilles rendered almost as much honor as to the Diana of Ephesus, their principal divinity. Before this temple Maximian caused his tribunal to be erected as soon as he learned the conversion of the soldiers appointed to guard St. Victor. Surrounded by numerous guards, he ordered the glorious martyr, and those whom he had initiated into the faith, to be dragged before him. When the news was spread that St. Victor was to be judged, the whole city ran to the Forum to enjoy the spectacle. Some seemed a prey to the most furious fanaticism; others, animated by a better spirit, wished to behold the martyr's triumph over the demons. On every side resounded the furious shouts of the populace, mingled with insults and threats against the heroic soldier. But all their fury did but increase his ardor. The pagans endeavored to compel him to bring back to the worship of the false gods his jailors whom he had converted. 'It is not permitted me,' answered he, 'to destroy what I have built.' The blessed converts, Alexander, Longinus, and Felician were interrogated, and, persevering faithfully in the confession of Jesus Christ, they were, by the Emperor's order, immediately beheaded, and quitted their mortal bodies to enter eternal life.

"Victor, seeing the holy soldiers delivered up to death, implored the Lord, in a voice broken with tears, that he might be associated in their martyrdom and glory, since he had been, under God, the author of their faith and their courage to confess Jesus Christ. Immediately, the glorious martyr, amidst the clamors of the crowd, was struck on every side. Suspending him again upon the rack, they tortured him in the most atrocious manner with cudgels and ox's sinews. Finally, the executioners loosed him, and he was remanded to prison. There, during three days, he persevered in prayer, recommending his martyrdom to God with great contrition of heart and abundance of tears.

"The cruel Maximian, learning the martyrs constancy, reserved to himself the termination of his torture, and wished to be his last, his most furious executioner. He ordered him to be brought into his presence; he interrogated him, and urged him to deny the true God; but his firmness remained unshaken. Cæsar's rage and fury against the soldier of Christ were unbounded, and carried him a second time to the greatest excesses; again did he try to overwhelm him with threats, insulting words, injuries, and maledictions. Maximian ordered an altar of Jupiter to be brought in and erected before him. Near the altar stood a priest of the idol, ready to perform his sacrilegious ceremonies, and the Emperor said to Victor; 'Burn incense, appease Jupiter, and be our friend.' At

these words, the courageous soldier of Christ, enflamed with the fire of the Holy Spirit, and unable longer to contain his zeal, approached as if to sacrifice, then, with a blow of his foot, he overthrew the altar. The detestable Emperor immediately commanded the foot to be cut off, and the martyr presented it to God, and to his King and Saviour, Jesus Christ, as the first fruits of the sacrifice of his body.

“At last came the moment to render to God his soul and body. Cæsar ordered that the martyr should be placed under the millstone; and, prompt and joyous, as if he had suffered nothing, he permitted himself to be dragged to it. The cruel lictors, executing the orders of the execrable and sanguinary tyrant, pushed the martyr under the stone which, by being rapidly rotated, was to crush his body. Then was that precious wheat pitilessly ground; then were the blessed bones of the invincible martyr cruelly bruised; but, suddenly, by a stroke of Divine power, the instrument of torture was broken. As the martyr still gave some signs of life, the executioners completed his victory, by cutting off with the sword that head consecrated to the Lord by so many courageous confessions, glorified by so many and such glorious combats. At the same moment, over the spot where the martyr lay, a heavenly voice was heard, saying: ‘Thou hast conquered, blessed Victor, thou hast conquered!’

“Maximian, hoping to triumph in death over

those who had vanquished him in life, added, in spite of himself, new lustre to the martyrs' glory. He absolutely forbade the pious honors of sepulture to be rendered to them, and commanded their bodies to be thrown into an arm of the sea on the southern coast of the city, that they might be devoured by the fishes. But God, in his goodness, watched over the honor of his servants, and prepared for the faithful in later ages, a powerful protection. By the ministry of angels, the holy bodies were rapidly borne over the waves to the opposite coast, where they were buried by the Christians in a crypt laboriously hewn out of the rock."

Thalia listened with emotion to the recital of Victorinus, and admired that indomitable resistance to the power of the oppressor.

"Glory to the martyrs!" cried she; "neither flatteries, nor menaces, nor torments could bend their will."

"It was not for unbending attachment to their *own* will, that they suffered," said Valerian, "but because of their fidelity to the will of God."

"If you desire to see the tombs which contain the venerable remains of Victor and his companions," said Victorinus, "I will conduct you thither."

"Yes," replied Thalia, "let us prostrate ourselves before the remains of those heroes who died for their faith."

Victorinus led the party back to the bay where St. Victor's jailors were baptized; there he hired a fisherman's boat to convey them to the opposite

shore. Crossing over that arm of the sea which became later the port of Marseilles, they soon landed at the foot of a little rocky hill, around which wound narrow foot-paths.

"Let us turn," said Victorinus, "towards this long-abandoned stone-quarry. It was through this opening between the rocks that the Christians, previous to the edict of liberty issued by Constantine, entered secretly during the night into the subterranean temple where they celebrated the Divine mysteries. Our Bishop Oresius, no longer dreading the insults and persecution of the pagans, has built a church between the Forum and Lacydon. The mother of our Lord, the Virgin blessed among women, is honored with public devotion not far from the temple wherein the pagans offered shameful sacrifices to Diana the huntress. But under the reign of Maximian, we were obliged to hold our religious assemblies in the subterranean crypt to which I am about to conduct you."

Victorinus and Valerian, leading Metrodorus and Thalia by the hand, entered a narrow passage. After they had gone about a hundred paces, they entered a temple of small dimensions, mysteriously lighted by a ray of the sun which entered through a narrow air-hole like a crevice in the rock.

"Here it was," said Victorinus, "that the Christians assembled together; here it was, say our ancestors, that our first Bishop Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, celebrated the Divine mysteries; here is he buried. On the right and left of the corridor which

we have just traversed, there are three rows of tombs cut in the rock, and there it was that the Christians gave their brethren the honors of sepulture. These tombs, hollowed out of the rock, near the crypt, contain the sacred bones of St. Victor and his companions."

Valerian piously kissed the hallowed spot. Thalia, prostrating herself, pressed her face to the tomb, and exclaimed: "O holy martyrs, obtain for me grace rather to die than deny my faith!"

"Is not that a child's tomb that I see between those of the blessed Victor and Longinus?" asked Metrodorus.

"You are not mistaken," answered Victorinus. "Longinus, one of the three soldiers converted by St. Victor, had a son called Durtherius. Full of love for Jesus Christ, that child had received baptism before his father attained the palm of martyrdom. What was his grief when, by Maximian's order, the martyrs' bodies were cast into the sea, to conceal them from the piety of the faithful! But he was speedily consoled, on learning that the sacred remains had been miraculously wafted over the waves, and, received by the Christians on the opposite shore, had been laid in a tomb worthy of them. In the transport of his joy he desired to venerate his father's relics. That he might immediately attain this happiness, he plunged into the waves, and, supported by love of God and filial piety, swam across the bay. Prostrating himself at the tomb, he prayed most fervently before the

doubly venerable remains of the martyr so dear to him, and by an inappreciable favor, he there expired of joy. The soul of the blessed child was in heaven reunited with that of him he so loved.

"The Christians interred him near his father, and now, while invoking St. Victor and his companions unite with their glorious names that of Durtherius.

These walks through Marseilles evoked sublime memories of noble deeds in the very places that had witnessed them; these friendly conversations deeply interested Thalia and Valerian, but they found the hours speeding away with distressing rapidity. On the evening previous to the last day they were to spend together, they dwelt, as they had so often done before, on the bright dreams of the future.

"At times," said Valerian, "I feel tempted to leave the army and follow you into Egypt. I might study eloquence, or engage in lucrative traffic; and then, presenting myself to your father with a brilliant fortune, might win his consent to the fulfilment of our mutual promises."

"Were I to listen to the voice of my heart, I would entreat you to follow us to Alexandria; but must not we be guided by reason? You must not abandon the military career. You will soon be appointed commander of a legion; later you will find yourself at the head of an army. Nothing could be more honorable in my father's eyes."

"Would that I might have a crown to lay at your feet."

"You may yet have it. Constantine may die. . ."

"May God avert from us such a misfortune! . . . Besides, his son Crispus is worthy to succeed him."

"He is too young to resist the ambition of competitors, who would spring up on every side. The army would give the purple to the generals who should have led it to victory. . . . Are you not beloved by the soldiers?"

"I know not. What matters it, provided I be loved by you."

Next morning at sunrise Metrodorus and his daughter embarked on the vessel that was to bear them to Alexandria. They were accompanied by Victorinus and Valerian, who remained on board until the pilot gave the signal for departure. Then the most tender farewells were exchanged.

"We shall meet again," said Thalia.

"May it be very soon," responded Valerian.

Standing on the shore, Victorinus and his son gave a last farewell signal as the vessel spread her sails, and their longing eyes followed her course until she was hidden from their view behind the promontory. Valerian, overwhelmed with sadness, for some time remained silent. Then he said to his father:

"Do you not think Thalia quite different from other young girls? Will not he who wins her for his consort, have reason to be proud of the conquest of her heart?"

"One must be blind not to admire her beauty. She also seems as well educated as her father, and

expresses herself with more unstudied grace. But I fear she is proud of the gifts she has received, and she has, perhaps, too much strength of will."

"That is a precious quality which leads to the accomplishment of great things."

"When not employed in the service of self-love, or when not changed into inveterate obstinacy. I hope that this haughty maiden may not be seduced into those novelties of religion which, as I have heard, audacious heretics are at this very time spreading in Egypt, with most diabolical skill."

"Fear not, father; Thalia is truly Christian."

"Have we not seen heretics who call themselves Christians, yet deny the divinity of Christ?"

"I believe that Thalia would willingly suffer martyrdom, rather than not acknowledge Jesus Christ to be the Word of God, united to our nature."

"Then she is worthy of you."





CHAPTER IV.

RHODANIA.

IT had been Valerian's intention to spend several days with his father; but the day after their guests' departure, a messenger brought him a letter from the Emperor, summoning him to return to Arles without delay. The letter informed him that a great assembly of bishops was to be convoked at Arles, and that he was to take all necessary measures for the maintenance of order, and the protection of the deliberations of the synod. Valerian went immediately to the house of Oresius, Bishop of Marseilles, and found him making preparations for his journey.

"Your paternity is doubtless going to Arles, to take part in the synod about to be opened there?"

"Yes, my son; I am too near that city not to hasten thither to join my brethren in the episcopate. The Emperor desires that the assemblage be very numerous. Here is the letter of convocation."

So saying, he handed to Valerian a papyrus bearing the imperial seal, and containing these words:

"Our intention is to bring together in the city of Arles, for the calends of August, the greatest number possible of bishops from all the provinces.

We have resolved to summon you hither. Consequently, the procurator of the province will furnish you with a conveyance at the expense of the state. You will choose for your companions two members of the clergy of the second rank. You may also bring with you three other persons to wait on you during your journey, and you will make all speed necessary to arrive for the appointed day."

"How many persons will compose your suite?" asked Valerian.

"I shall take with me only the lector Nazarius."

"Then, if you permit, we will travel together."

"I could not have better company. But we must set out immediately. The carriage is ready, and awaits my orders. I wish to reach Arles before the first of August, that I may confer with the bishop of that city, the venerable Marinus."

Valerian went to bid adieu to his father, who was deeply grieved at his hasty departure; but he could not hesitate when duty bade him return to his post.

"Father, you must come and spend some days with me at Arles, and be present with me at an august assembly of bishops. It is a spectacle one does not see every day."

"At my age," answered Victorinus, "one cannot be travelling about. It is necessary to prepare only for the great voyage from earth to heaven, for which death may, at any moment, give the signal."

A few hours later, Valerian, seated beside Oresius in one of the state post-carriages, placed by the

Emperor at the disposition of the bishops invited to the synod, was being carried to Arles by four horses, which needed no whip to urge them over the space from one relay to another. At times the road skirted the Rhone, and Valerian remembered the happy hours he had spent with Thalia, some days previous, while descending that beautiful stream. His thoughts followed her upon the waves of the Mediterranean. Where was now the vessel that bore her away? Was it not, perhaps, struggling with the fury of the tempest? Or was it being wafted by favorable winds to the coast of Egypt?

Notwithstanding the speed of their horses, it took them more than half a day to travel from Marseilles to Arles, and Valerian would have found the ride wearisome had not his travelling companion been one whose conversation caused him to forget the length of the way.

"Would it be indiscreet in me to ask of your paternity what will be the chief subject of deliberation during the synod?"

"We are summoned in particular to pronounce judgment on the schism of the Donatists."

"This is the first time I have heard such a schism mentioned."

"Nevertheless, it has been in existence for several years; but as it made havoc only in the churches of Africa, there was not much talk of it in Gaul until now."

"I would be glad to know something of it, since, while you are judging it, it will be my office to see that nothing disturb your deliberations."

“ You are well aware how great is our respect for the Holy Scriptures. We confide them only to Christians of tried fidelity ; we guard them as sacred and mysterious objects ; we forbid the faithful to allow them to fall into the hands of the pagans, who would profane them, or would, perhaps, seek in them matter for new calumnies against us, new incentives to persecution. The pagans of later times have been desirous, at every and any cost, to obtain the Sacred Writings. As they accused us of being the enemies of the human race, they hoped to find in those books, which we so carefully concealed, manifest proofs of a vast conspiracy against humanity in general, and the Roman empire in particular. They thought that the martyrs did not, at their interrogatories, reveal the secret doctrine of the Christians, and that to know it they must find the holy books. But the more they endeavored to possess themselves of them, the more determined was our refusal to give them up. To drag from us our sacred deposit, the most frightful tortures were vainly employed ; nevertheless, it must be acknowledged they found some few Christians who, growing faint-hearted at the sight of the rack and red-hot gridiron, to escape them, delivered up the Sacred Writings they had in their possession. The Church condemned their cowardice and treason, and they have been branded with the name of traitors or Traditors.

“ As there have always been proud spirits who would wish to be more severe than the Church,

some of the bishops and priests of Africa, not content with condemning the Traditors, regarded their fault as irremissible. Still more, they contended that sacraments administered by those who had had the weakness to give up the holy books, were absolutely invalid, and declared null ordination conferred by an episcopal Traditor. The partisans of this erroneous opinion separated themselves from the Church, and formed a schism, of which the Bishop Donatus was the principal abettor. When Cecelian was named Bishop of Carthage, the Donatists refused to recognize him, upon pretext that he had been ordained by a Traditor. Now Felix of Aptonga, who had imposed hands on Cecelian, had never delivered up the Sacred Books; but even had he done so, the ordination would, nevertheless, have been valid. Pope Melchiades condemned the Donatists, but, unwilling to submit to his judgment, they declared he had been misinformed of the affair. They have appealed to Constantine to have their cause judged by the bishops of Gaul. Constantine might have replied that, *since Rome had spoken, the cause was decided*, but in order to satisfy them, and in the hope of more certainly putting an end to the schism, he has begged us to assemble at Arles to pronounce judgment. The vicar of the Pretorian prefect in Africa, having made legal inquiry, and examined witnesses, is convinced that Felix of Aptonga never delivered the Holy Scriptures to the magistrates.

"What a change! But a few years have flown by

since the Pretorian Prefects punished with most horrible tortures, those who would not deliver up the Sacred Scriptures, and now they are ready to punish those who have given them up. The magistrates then recognize that what they formerly commanded was a crime, and that to disobey them was a duty?

“Are not we ourselves at this moment a proof of the defeat of paganism and the triumph of the Church? Diocletian, assuredly, could not have foreseen that the son of Constantius Chlorus would have the bishops and their suite travel at the public expense, and would render them as much honor as to the dignitaries of the empire.

“There will be found some pagans who will complain that the bishops’ journeys exhaust the treasury.”

Oresius and Valerian entered Arles by the gate nearest the amphitheatre. There was already a great stir in the city, which was preparing to give a worthy reception to the numerous bishops called to the synod. Here and there suitable lodgings were being provided. The merchants thought only of laying up a store of provisions; the boatmen of the Rhone were adorning their barks with bannerets of various colors; and festivity reigned throughout the city. The very pagans were curious to see that great reunion of bishops of which the Christians spoke with so much joy. They had not in their worship any solemnity that could compare with the synod.

Several bishops, among whom were Nerus of Vienne, Daphnus of Vaison, Vocius of Lyons, and Orientalis of Bordeaux, arrived at Arles a short time after Oresius, and Marinus, the bishop of Arles, received them into his house. Valerian offered hospitality to the Bishop of Marseilles and to Rheticius, bishop of Autun. In his youth Rheticius had, like Metrodorus, cultivated the art of speaking, and had been distinguished for his eloquence. His talents were enhanced by his piety. He had espoused a young girl of illustrious birth and rare beauty, but as they both desired to lead an angelic life in a mortal body, she lived with him as a sister. Alms-giving, prayer and fasting sanctified those chaste spouses. Each secretly implored of our Lord the grace to die first, but the wife obtained the favor. When she felt that death was at hand, she said to Rheticius:

"Beloved brother, I beg you to grant me a last favor. Promise me that your tomb shall be beside mine, and that our virginal bed shall be the same after death."

Rheticius promised, and caused a double tomb to be cut in a rock. He wished to rest, when his hour should come, beside her whom he had loved here below, in the hope of loving her eternally in heaven. A short time after the death of his spouse, Rheticius was chosen bishop by the clergy and people of Autun.

Valerian heard these touching details from the mouth of the priest Amandus, who accompanied

Rheticus to the council. Some months later Valerian, through a letter from Amandus, learned of the death of the Bishop of Autun. "We have just lost," said the letter, "our venerable prelate, whose life was full of blessings and good works. He has been interred in the tomb already prepared beside his virginal spouse. When we raised the tombstone we recognized, without difficulty, the blessed servant of Christ. Death had scarcely altered her pure body. But, O prodigy, yet more marvellous! when we were about to place beside her the remains of her spouse, she extended her left hand, as if to welcome him. Who, then, is the God who makes love stronger than death, and reanimates the dust of the tomb? It is thou, O Christ our Master; it is thou who, in such prodigies, givest us a pledge of a blessed resurrection!"

Each day beheld new bishops entering into Arles. All, however, were not of Gaul. Several came from Spain, others from the borders of the Rhine, and some from Great Britain, such as Eborius, bishop of York, Restitutus of London, and Adelphius of Colchester. They only waited the coming of the Pope's legates to open the Council, nor did they long delay. They were the priests Claudian and Vitus, and the deacons Eugenius and Cyriacus. The bishops immediately assembled in the church which, thirty years later, at the celebration of the Third Council of Arles, was dedicated under the title of the Basilica of St. Mary Major.

The pillars of this church are now buried one-

third of their height, because the pavement has been raised to the level of the street.

It had the form of a Greek temple, divided into three *cella*, and terminated by the semicircle of the Roman basilica. Had it been, primitively, a pagan temple, erected under Julius Cæsar to the Good Goddess? We have reason to think so. Its vaults and semicircular arches have the purity of Roman architecture in the time of Julius Cæsar and Augustus. In the excavations made in 1592, to restore the facade (with all the bad taste of that epoch), a votive altar, dedicated to the Good Goddess, was discovered. It is preserved in the museum at Arles.

The bishops first examined the cause submitted to their judgment by the Emperor. They fully exonerated the Bishop of Carthage from all the accusations brought against him and condemned the Donatists. They then issued a synodal letter to inform the Pope of the result of their deliberations. On hearing the letter, Valerian was struck with the testimonies of respect shown to the Sovereign Pontiff by that august assembly of bishops.

"To the Most Holy Pope Sylvester, Eternal Salvation in the Lord.

"Assembled at Arles by the desire of the most pious Emperor, in the bonds of fraternal charity and in communion with the Catholic Church, our Mother, we salute you most glorious Pope, with the respect that is your due. We have examined the controversy raised by the Donatists. Those men

have shown themselves unreasonable in their passion and inimical to faith and ecclesiastical discipline. They no longer respect the presence of the Holy Spirit, nor the authority of tradition and the Holy Scriptures. None of their allegations have been sustained, and far from presenting the least proof of their accusations, they have not even been able to agree among themselves upon the complaints they were to bring forward. Hence, by the judgment of God and of our Mother the Church, who knows how to recognize and defend those who are truly her children, they have been condemned. Would to God, beloved Brother, that you had been able to assist at this grand spectacle! We think that the sentence pronounced against them would then have been more severe. The joy of our assembly would have been most lively, had you been able to judge with us. But you could not, on any account, withdraw yourself from those places where the apostles always resided, and where their blood unceasingly attests the glory of God."

After having given their judgment in the affair of the Donatists, the bishops treated of divers points of discipline and promulgated several regulations, one of which made on Valerian a deep impression, as it seemed framed for him in answer to his most secret thoughts. The fourth canon of discipline was couched in the following terms: "Soldiers who, under pretext of religion, shall quit the profession of arms, shall be separated from communion."

Thus, at the very time when Valerian was thinking of how he might live near Thalia; when he

would have willingly renounced his career that he might more speedily rejoin her; when he had serious intentions of becoming a merchant at Alexandria, that he might amass wealth and win her without delay, the voice of the Church said to him: "You must not quit the army; love of a woman must not lead you to abandon your flag. Religion itself would not be a sufficient warrant for refusing the aid of your arms to your country menaced by barbarians."

They were then far removed from the time in which Tertullian had severely condemned the military profession and exhorted the faithful not to embrace it; from that in which St. Maximilian, martyred for having refused military service through a motive of religion, said to his judges: "As I am a Christian, I cannot do evil." Soldiers were no longer obliged to burn incense before the image of the Emperor or the statue of Victory. The monogram of Christ had been borne on the standard of the army ever since Constantine had conquered through the sign of the Cross. The Church had triumphed and won its liberty, thanks to the invincible courage of the Christian soldiers: she did not wish to deprive herself of such useful auxiliaries. Paganism, defended by the armies of Maxentius or Maximian, would have been conqueror, had the Christian soldiers commanded by Constantine been less numerous. Already, perhaps, were other battles impending on which would depend the fate of Christianity. Licinius, jealous of Con-

stantine's popularity, might renew Maximian's attempt, and seek his support from the pagans, irritated at the downfall of the former national worship and ever ready for revolt. The struggle between the two emperors would be a struggle between the two religions, and the Christian faith would need all its defenders. On this account did the Council of Arles pronounce excommunication against those who should desert the army under religious pretexts.

Valerian understood all this, and took a firm resolution to stand by his flag in defence of Church and country. Thalia was not, perhaps, deceived in predicting that he should soon be at the head of a legion. Were war to be declared, he hoped to distinguish himself by some brilliant exploit. The Emperor would wish to reward him; he would ask for a military command in Egypt.

After the conclusion of the Synod of Arles, the prelates hastened to return to their respective sees, and the city, which, during their stay, had been full of animation, resumed its usual quiet aspect. Valerian suffered no longer the torments of irresolution; his determination was fully settled. He had traced out plans for the execution of which he only waited the favorable opportunity. With exemplary exactitude he fulfilled all the duties of his office, and, without failing in his accustomed kindness to his soldiers, maintained perfect discipline. To excite the ardor of the centurions and decemvirs, he was present more frequently at the military exer-

aises, which were held in the arena of the amphitheatre. Yet nothing could dispel the sadness of his heart; Thalia was ever present to his mind, and thoughts of her were evoked in every spot where he had been accustomed to see her,—on the banks of the Rhone, on the borders of the neighboring forest, on the benches of the theatre, where the eloquence of Hermegistus had already caused that of Metrodorus to be forgotten. Albinus, Cerealis, and other friends would have tried to divert him, but, without really avoiding, he did not seek them. His grief was dear to him, and he found therein a bitter sweetness which he relished in secret. He might frequently be seen walking thoughtfully around the city, wandering alone in the shadow of the forests, or seated on the banks of the river, on whose waves had been spent with Thalia his last moments of happiness.

Valerian willingly directed his walk towards the Champs-Elysées, that vast assemblage of funereal monuments, which has not yet entirely disappeared, and which make a deep impression on the traveller who walks through *Aliscamps*, the avenue of tombs. The Champs-Elysées of Arles extend, on the east of the city, over a rocky plain sufficiently elevated above the Rhone to be free from the irruption of its waters. Here were to be seen simple cippes and broken columns; there, little edifices destined to receive the cinerary urns which enclosed the ashes of the dead, or the sarcophagi in which rested their bones. These Champs-Elysées were

renowned throughout Southern Gaul. The wealthy families of cities near Arles had there their tomb. The pagans deposited in the bark of the deceased an obolus, destined to pay Charon, the ferryman of the infernal river, who transported, according to their belief, the souls of the dead to the subterranean Elysium across the river Styx, which can be crossed but once. After this precaution, they placed the remains of the dead in a boat, which, descending the Rhone, carried the sarcophagus near the tomb that was to receive it.

Among those funereal monuments, Valerian saw, here and there, Christians at prayer, and pagans strewing flowers over the ashes of a father, mother, or child whom death had ravished from them. A young couple, Valerius and Chrysogona, came frequently to render this testimony of regret to their only daughter, Siricio, who died at the age of three years. Her body, enveloped in cloth of gold and silk, had been enclosed in a leaden coffin, and then deposited in a marble sarcophagus in a vault of common stone. On one side of the monument were cut two heads of the winged Medusa, and also poppy flowers, the symbol of eternal sleep, while, between these, ran the following inscription:

“Eternal peace to our most sweet and innocent daughter, the youthful Chrysogona Siricio. She lived three years two months and twenty-seven days. Her parents, Valerius and Chrysogona, have erected this monument to their beloved daughter, whom they, through life, will mourn.”

Valerian, at times, met also Laurentius, accompanied by Autarcus, his father, going to the tomb of his wife, Julia Tyrannia, who died at the age of twenty years. The whole city of Arles had mourned with Laurentius, and the young woman had been surnamed, by her fellow-citizens, "the tenth Muse," on account of her rare talents as a musician. On her tomb were represented the principal musical instruments on which she had displayed so much skill. On the right was sculptured a lyre, and on the left a syrinx with seven pipes. Between these bas-reliefs ran the simple inscription :

"To Julia Tyrannia, who lived twenty years and eight months. By her manners and talents, she was a model to other women. This monument has been erected by Autarcus to his daughter-in-law, and by Laurentius to his wife."

The widow Dyonisia came almost daily to water, with her tears, the tomb of her daughter, Aelia, who died at the age of seventeen, as she was preparing to celebrate her marriage. This child was her last tie on earth, and she erected a marble monument to her memory, on which she begged the sculptor to engrave some epitaph which would express the extent of her grief. The sculptor had done his best. He recalled to his mind some hemistichs from Virgil, and consulted a collection of epitaphs, arranged for the use of his profession. Desirous of gaining his money, he had composed with little taste, but great pains, the following inscription :

“O crime! O injustice! Here rests an admirable young girl! This is more than grief! She has been torn from her mother without having deserved it. She died, this virgin, at an age which promised delight. Her marriage had been arranged to the great joy of her relations. She lived seventeen years seven months and eighteen days. Happy her father who knew not such a loss. The heart of her mother, Dyonisia, is torn by a wound that shall forever bleed. Her aged father has received the young girl, who went to be reunited to him.”

Sculptors or stone-cutters were continually occupied in erecting other funereal monuments, carving bas-reliefs, or engraving inscriptions, and several of them had formed at the entrance to the Champs-Élysées, a kind of workshop in the open air. A large tent, fastened to four piles driven firmly into the ground, sheltered them from the heat of the sun. Some were pagans, and would work only for those who remained in idolatry; others were Christians, and to them the Christians had recourse. Among the latter, the best known was the aged Liberius. He was the son of a slave, and had been born in the house of a sculptor who enriched the Appian Way with remarkable funereal monuments. His master instructed him in his art at an early age, and at first intrusted him with the roughest part of the work, but, satisfied with his progress, afterwards left to him the cutting of letters and the ornamentation of the tombs. Had his master lived,

Liberius would have become a distinguished sculptor, but he died young, and left his slave to an heir who, not appreciating his talent, soon sold him. His purchaser took him to Gaul, instructed him in the truths of faith, had him baptized and married to a Christian slave, and to both he gave their liberty. Then it was that Liberius resumed his beloved art. No one in Arles could engrave an epitaph more correctly, or sculpture emblematic ornaments with more grace, but the pagans could never prevail on him to work for them, as he would not employ his talent in cutting idolatrous emblems; besides, the Christians were sufficiently numerous to keep him continually occupied. Liberius was happy to be able to render to the remains of the faithful the honors which are their due, and he practised his art with so much pious joy that nothing seemed wanting to his happiness. But death, by a sudden stroke, robbed him of the cherished object of his affections,—his wife died in giving birth to a daughter. Liberius, who had never been able to express without emotion the grief of others, watered with his tears the tomb that was to receive the remains of his wife. He engraved on the stone an inscription worthy of his love and his faith :

“Most gentle soul, thou livest in the peace of Christ. We lived together three years two months and six days. Pray for thy spouse, who will regret thee all his life.”

On the right of the epitaph he cut a dove with its wings extended in flight, and on the left, another

dove, its wings partially open, and its eyes fixed on heaven.

What ineffable tenderness did Liberius feel for the frail infant whose birth had cost its mother's life! He gave her the name of Rhodania, which had been her mother's, and which he had so often pronounced with so much love. With what trembling did he watch over her cradle! with what joy did he behold her growing large and strong! She resembled neither of her parents, but rather those ideal heads which are the offspring of the artist's dream. Even in her infancy, her playthings were her father's tools, and her baby fingers handled the chisel, kneaded the clay, and broke the marble with the hammer. Liberius smiled at her childish attempts; he knew that children do willingly what they see done, and amuse themselves with whatever comes next to hand. But, day by day, Rhodania held her pencil with firmer hand, and gave more certain blows with the chisel. At last came a moment when Liberius was astonished at what his child had produced in her play, and recognized, with transports of joy and paternal pride, that she had the skilful eye and the holy ardor of the true artist. Hence, after she had attained her twelfth year, Rhodania never left her father, but worked beside him in his studio at the Champs-Élysées.

More than once Valerian had, from a distance, perceived Liberius and his daughter cutting at grave-stones under their tent. Although much surprised at seeing a chisel in the hands of so

young a child, he never approached to examine her labor. One of his friends, Geminius, administrator of finance, who resided at Arles, and whose jurisdiction extended over nine provinces, begged him to go with him to see, previous to their completion, the tombs he had ordered for himself and wife. For Geminius, although but thirty-eight years old, felt already the ravages of the disease which was soon to rob him of life. Valerian directed his steps towards the workshop, and as soon as he had drawn aside the canvas, he perceived Rhodania in profile, kneeling before a slab of marble, and finishing some delicate sculpture which absorbed her whole attention. He stopped; his heart palpitated violently, for Thalia, robbed of some years, seemed there before him. There was truly the same profile of exquisite purity, the same abundant tresses of raven hair, the same graceful neck, the same brilliant complexion, now slightly tinged with the rays of the noon-day sun. Never could he have supposed so close a resemblance possible. Taking a few steps forward, he saluted Liberius, and Rhodania, at the sight of a stranger, interrupted her work and arose. Valerian, who gazed with admiration on one who reminded him of the absent beloved one, was obliged to confess that Thalia's eyes had not so much sweetness nor her lips so candid a smile.

"I regret to interrupt you," said Valerian, "but I come at the request of Geminius, who wishes me to see the tombs he has ordered."

"That which is to receive his wife's sarcophagus," replied Liberius, "is nearly finished. My daughter has charge of it, and she has worked with an eagerness I hope to see moderated in future. As to Geminus's, I have scarcely begun it."

"Allow me to compliment you on your daughter's talent. It is rarely possessed by a woman, and it is still rarer to see it successfully employed at so tender an age."

"I am astonished at it myself, and bless God who has given such a consolation to my old age."

"I am not so young," said Rhodania, resting her head on Liberius's arm with childlike grace. "I shall soon be fourteen. For six years I have been receiving lessons from my father. Who would not become skilful under his direction?"

"Would you, my dear child, show me what you can do?"

"I will most willingly explain what I have cut on this tomb." So saying, she brought Valerian before a large block of marble, in purity far inferior to the marble of Paros; on it were three bas-reliefs separated by columns.

"In the centre," said Rhodania, "I have cut a woman in prayer; she is kneeling, her hands raised to heaven. My father designed it after some he had seen in the Roman catacombs. On the right I have represented the resurrection of Lazarus. Here you see his tomb cut in the rock, his two sisters, Martha and Mary Magdalen, and Christ

commanding Death to deliver up his prey. We often carve some such scene on Christian tombs, to show that we firmly believe in the future resurrection. I might have represented the daughter of Jairus restored to her father, or the widow's son of Naim given back to his mother; but as the memory of Lazarus and his two sisters is the most popular in this province, I thought it best to depict the resurrection of the friend of Jesus. On the left I have shown Moses in the desert, striking the rock, from which gushes forth a stream of living water, which revives his people dying of thirst. It is a figure of Him who shed His redeeming blood for the world's salvation. This is the gift of God; waters that gush forth for eternal life. Those who drink of them shall never thirst for temporal joys. The Apostle Paul himself, invites us to behold in the rock struck by Moses a figure of the Saviour, when he exclaims: 'Now the rock was Christ!'

With delight Valerian listened to Rhodania's explanations, while he admired the deep symbolism of the sculptures on Christian tombs. In an artistic point of view, those bas-reliefs certainly left something to be desired; the types were too much the same, the posture too stiff, the drapery too heavy, for, in the early creations of Christian genius, there was nothing to remind one of the masterpieces of pagan sculpture. But it mattered little whether they were marvels of art; they were a profession of faith; they contained great instruction, expressing in hieroglyphic characters, easily

read by even the most illiterate, the religious truths preached to the world by the apostles, and the principal facts of both the Old and the New Testaments.

"I admire, more and more, the skill with which you wield the chisel," said Valerian, as surprised as delighted at a resemblance which, to his eyes, transformed Rhodania into a living portrait of Thalia.

"My father has helped me very much," replied the young artist, modestly blushing. "Without him, I could not have accomplished what you see."

"Will you ornament Geminius's tomb?" asked Valerian of Liberius.

"He begged me to make it plainer, and I shall conform to his desire. In the centre, I have sculptured our Lord. Now that Christians openly practise their worship, we do not represent Christ on our tombs by symbolical figures, by the Alpha and Omega, or by interlacing the first letters of the Saviour's name in Greek. At the left of Christ, I shall represent Geminius before his conversion, and at the right, after his conversion."

"How will you show that he renounced paganism to embrace Christianity?"

"Emblematically; for the art of the designer must often have recourse to this means to express an idea. Geminius on the left, shall carry in his hand an idol, a domestic god, the token of his attachment to paganism. Geminius on the right shall bear a cross, to signify that he has obeyed the

call of our Lord: 'If any one will come after me, let him bear his cross and follow me.'"

Valerian often returned to Liberius's workshop, either to think of Thalia in presence of Rhodania, or to familiarize himself with the customs of Christian sculpture.

"What subjects do you most frequently represent on tombs?" he asked the sculptor.

"Formerly," responded Liberius, "we traced those personages of the Old Testament who prefigured the Messiah. Thus we concealed from the pagans the sacred object of our adorations, while the faithful readily perceived the reality under the figure. We did not fear to recall the remembrance of the first fault, by showing the serpent-tempter coiled among the branches of the forbidden tree, between Adam and Eve. Our first father is a figure of our Saviour, who is the new Adam. Death was introduced into the world by the first man; life has been restored to us by Jesus Christ. The just Abel, immolated by the fratricidal Cain, is another figure of the Messiah — the Innocent One, by excellence, put to death by sinners, and shedding his redeeming blood for the salvation of the human race. Noah in the ark, saving the just ones spared from the deluge, equally represents Jesus Christ who has founded the Church, the ark of the new alliance, in which must take refuge all who wish to escape the corruption of the world. Joseph sold by his brethren, is the image of our Lord sold by Judas. Moses, the legislator of the Hebrew people, announces the

Messiah, the legislator of the Christian people. The prophet Jonas coming forth from the whale's belly, in which he had been enclosed for three days, was the figure of Jesus Christ coming forth from the tomb the third day after his sepulture. This incident in the life of Jonas is often carved on Christian tombs. Our Lord himself showed its prophetic sense, when he said to the Jews: 'This people demands a sign, and a sign shall not be given it, save the sign of Jonas the prophet.' Now that we have liberty to profess our religion, we may, with less danger than formerly, sculpture on tombs the principal events of the life of Jesus Christ; His birth in the stable of Bethlehem; the adoration of the shepherds and the Magi; His miracles; the proofs of His goodness as well as of His power; His sacrifice and His glorious resurrection. Among our Lord's miracles, there is one very frequently portrayed on our tombs, that is, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, symbol of that August Mystery, the secret of which we should not reveal to the profane.

"It is easy now to distinguish Christian sepulchres from those that inclose the remains of pagans; the sculptures that adorn them prevent all mistake. But there was less difference during the days of persecution, and now when I walk through the Champs-Élysées, I vainly seek for certain signs to let me know where rest the Christians who died in the last century.

"Those signs, nevertheless, exist, although they do not at first strike the eye, but must be sought

for. When on one of those old tombs you see a palm, a vessel sailing towards heaven, the Alpha and Omega, the monogram of Christ, a fish, or its Greek name, *ichthus*, you cannot be deceived; a Christian rests there."

"But often we can perceive no such sign."

"Then examine the epitaph; remark attentively what it says, and what it does not say. Christianity, in revealing to us eternal life, and obliging us to hope for a blessed immortality, has dissipated the false ideas which pagans entertain of death. To them it is the supreme misfortune, to us, the beginning of felicity; for them, eternal sleep; for us, the glorious awaking. As epitaphs naturally reveal how death is regarded by those who compose them, there must necessarily be a radical difference between those of pagans, who have no hope, and those of Christians, who greet death as the entrance to a better life, according to the expression of St. Paul, Living in God! *in Deo vivas!* This is a desire, a consolation, a cry of joy that can be found on no pagan tomb.

"Again you may find on the Christian's tomb the simple words, *in pace!* Live in peace, rest in peace in the Lord! Be in peace with Christ!

"To express the inhumation of their brethren, Christians employ a word revealing their faith in the future resurrection, 'deposited, *depositio*; such a one was deposited here on such a day.' These, then, are expressions which indicate with certainty

Christian sepulchres, even when we find thereon no bas-reliefs or other sculptured signs.

“Nor is it sufficient to notice those characteristic terms; what is *not* said, must also be observed. Before Jesus Christ there are no slaves; all are but servants of God, having the same origin, the same destiny. Hence Christians, delivered from servitude by the Saviour, never inscribe on their tombs the words *slave* or *freeman*, to designate the condition of those there interred. Pagan epitaphs, on the contrary, very frequently mention these conditions. Neither do Christians name the country of the deceased, nor his parents nor children; we have all the same father, who is God; the same country, which is heaven. Pagans wish that the tombstone indicate the profession. On three or four, only a few steps from here, you will find the words, ‘He belonged to the Corporation of Carpenters.’ Christians have but one profession, that of serving God; none other is named on their tombs. Their funeral inscriptions mention not their heirs or posterity. All the faithful are co-heirs with Jesus Christ, and with a title so glorious, what thought can be given to terrestrial goods? The pagans inscribe on their tombs the *prænomen*, *nomen* and *cognomen*; such pompous show is disliked by Christians, who record only the *name* of the deceased, that the survivors may pray for him. Hence, when you find on a tombstone the three names of the deceased, the words *slave* or *freeman*, or any indication of the family, country, or profession, or

any allusion to heirs or descendants, you may conclude it to be a pagan tomb."

The study of Christian tombs was not Valerian's sole occupation. He awaited daily, with the utmost anxiety, news of the war which Constantine was about to declare against Licinius. The conqueror of Maxentius had demanded of the conqueror of Maximian an equal division of the empire between them, who remained sole masters of the world. Licinius, wishing to keep for himself not only the entire East, but also Greece, Illyricum, and Egypt, responded with such haughtiness to Constantine's propositions that war became inevitable. The fate of the empire, and, what was still more important, the fate of the Christians, depended on the issue. Reliance might be placed on Constantine's genius, and especially on the succors of heaven; but they knew that the fate of battle often turns on some unforeseen accident.

About the middle of October news arrived that Licinius had been defeated at Cibalis, and two months later, Constantine achieved a second victory at Adrianople. Licinius then begged for peace, and consented to a more equitable division of the empire.

Valerian soon had additional cause of joy. The Sarmatians having revolted on the borders of the Danube, and the Franks on the Rhine, Constantine marched against the Sarmatians, and sent his son Crispus to defend the frontiers of Gaul. To assure the success of his son's first expedition he

surrounded him with well-trying veterans. One of the best legions having lost its commander, he gave the office to Valerian, persuaded that he could not place under his son a more devoted general.

When Valerian received the imperial commission announcing his appointment, and commanding him to assume immediately his position in Crispus's army, he remembered Thalia's words: "Soon, without doubt, you will be at the head of a legion." She had clearly foreseen the future. Was she initiated into the mysterious practices of theurgy, so common among the Egyptians? Should her other predictions be as fully accomplished? Whatever might be his destiny, Valerian was firmly resolved never to betray his duty to satisfy his ambition. He hastened to acquaint Thalia, by letter, with his nomination.

Albinus, Cerealis, Agathon, and others of Valerian's friends strongly applauded his nomination to a superior grade, but expressed, at a farewell banquet, how deeply they regretted his departure from a city in which he left behind him so many favorable remembrances, and to which he might never more return.

"May we some day behold you as Cæsar!" said Albinus, at the end of the banquet, when the Rhone wine had mounted to their heads.

"And may Thalia, with you, receive the purple," added Agathon.

"My wishes are more simple," answered Vale-

lian. "May I everywhere meet with as excellent friends!"

The new commander went to contemplate once more, at the Champs-Élysées, her who so wonderfully reminded him of his dear Thalia. Rhodania presented him with a cameo, on which she had cut a bark sailing over stormy waves, and bearing on its mast two doves pecking at a grape. The bark was the symbol of the Church pursuing its course through the ocean of ages; the doves were a figure of the faithful, and the grape the symbol of the Blessed Eucharist.

"Since you are leaving us, please accept this little work, which will remind you of our city."

A charming blush suffused Rhodania's countenance, as, with the gracious smile that always hovered on her lips, she pronounced these words.

"I had no need of the cameo, lovely child, to recall you and your father to my memory, but your gift shall never leave me. I will hang it on my breast, and bear it into all the bloody combats in which I am about to be engaged."

Notwithstanding his military energy, Valerian with a sad heart left Arles to rejoin the army of Crispus, near the Rhine. "Alas!" said he to himself, "life is but a succession of farewells."





CHAPTER V.

ARIUS.

BEFORE leaving Arles, Metrodorus had written to Cleobulus, a popular rhetorician of Alexandria, who, twenty years previous, had been his fellow-pupil under Jamblicius, and who had ever remained faithful to their early friendship. He informed him in his letter of his approaching departure for Alexandria, and begged him to procure for himself and daughter suitable lodging at some distance from the mercantile quarter of the city and well adapted for study; he also desired him to inform Arius of his willingness to employ all his eloquence for the success of the new doctrines. Cleobulus easily found, far from the centre of the city, a house suitable to the rhetorician's wishes, and he went daily to the port to inquire if a vessel from Marseilles had yet been signalized. For several days none arrived, save from Carthage, Sicily, or Athens. The vessel in which Metrodorus had sailed encountered a tempest so violent that the pilot was obliged to take refuge in Malta, but when the weather became calm he resumed his course and finally arrived at Alexandria. As soon as the vessel entered the harbor, Cleobulus went out in a small boat, the

sooner to meet his friend, and expedite his preparations for debarkation.

"How sweet to meet old friends!" exclaimed Metrodorus, embracing him.

"By Apollo, your eloquence has not changed you! You are just what you were when we listened together to that old fool Jamblicus exhorting us to the study of philosophy."

"I may say the same of you. Your head is bald, but you are still hale and active, and I suppose you are always in good-humor."

"How could I be otherwise? Alexandria becomes more amusing every day. One meets here nothing but fools."

"With what surprise you regard my daughter. Do you not recognize little Thalia, who used to be so curious, and who tried so hard to make you explain the Egyptian mysteries?"

"When she was a child I predicted she would one day be as beautiful as Aphrodite, but I see she has surpassed all my expectations."

"You would make her blush, did she not know that compliments from such a jester as you are not to be taken literally. Your son Theonas must now be a handsome young man."

"Don't mention him. I can't draw him from the society of Athanasius. But I shall have time enough to complain; let us now see about getting to the quay as speedily as possible. Have your baggage carried to the boat I came in, and we will go ashore."

A few moments later, the boat left the ship, and as the rowers bent over their oars, they sang in chorus, as well to keep up their spirits as to render their motion uniform. Listening to their song, Metrodorus was astonished to hear the following words:

M "The Word hath created the universe,
The mountains, the rivers, and seas;
Let him us from the danger deliver,
And the fury of tempest appease,
Better than the ox Apis,
And the god Serapis.

"But if Christ should permit that the pilot
Our bark to destruction should steer,
Our complaint we would make to the Father,
The God whom alone we revere,
More than the ox Apis,
And the god Serapis."

M

"Those are strange words to hear from the mouths of boatmen," said Metrodorus. "That is a kind of popular canticle set to a common air."

"Do you know who composed for the sailors those verses which speak so disrespectfully of Christ?"

"You want to ensnare me. If it was yourself, tell me immediately."

"Were I to write verses for sailors, I should speak of the murmuring breeze, the raging storm, and the howling wind, and not of God the Father and Serapis. The poet who composed those beautiful verses has the honor of numbering you among his admirers. He is called Arius."

"Are you in earnest?"

"He has written such chants for the wool-carders, the carpenters, the unfortunates who turn the wheel, for the shoemakers —"

"For what end?"

"To bring before the people, as he says, the sublime truths he has discovered."

Metrodorus begged the boatmen to repeat their chant, in which he discovered beauties he had failed to discern at the first hearing, when he had not known who was their author.

"He expresses, very ingeniously, the difference he desires to establish between the Father and the Son."

"I am to be pitied, no doubt; but it is impossible for me to appreciate his talent, since I am neither Christian, nor Pagan, nor Gnostic, nor Eclectic, nor Platonian, nor Arian."

"What are you then?"

"Epicurean. I enjoy life whenever I can, which is seldom; and I laugh at human folly when it is displayed before my eyes, which is very often."

When the boatmen had moored the bark, a strong-looking man, and a woman, still young, helped Cleobulus to mount on the quay.

"This is your new master," said he, pointing to Metrodorus. Turning to the latter, he continued: "I bought these two slaves for you. The husband's name is Philemon, and there is nothing to prevent you from calling the woman Baucis. If you want to free them, you are at liberty to do so."

Christians, among other extravagances, pretend that slaves are our brethren, and should be freed. They will soon forbid us to put our horses in the stable and our cattle in the shed. For my part, I find slaves so convenient that I could not dispense with them."

Philemon and Baucis took charge of the baggage, while Cleobulus conducted his friends towards the dwelling he had chosen for them. When they reached the market-place, they found some difficulty in proceeding, for a crowd of curious idlers had congregated around three or four female herb venders, who seemed ready, at any moment, to come to blows, so excited were their voices and gestures.

"Your Carponas is famous, indeed," said one. "He always seems to be in a passion, and he cannot speak without sweating blood and water."

"He is always more eloquent," retorted the other, "than your Arius, who listens to his own words, and stops after every sentence, as if to ask: Do not I say pretty things?"

"If to be eloquent means to scream at the top of one's voice, I acknowledge that Arius cannot vie with Carponas."

"Ah, if you would but come and hear Colluthus preach," broke in the third, "you would never listen to Arius or Carponas again."

"To be sure!" exclaimed the first. "Hear Colluthus, who talks as if his mouth were full of beans!"

"And who studies," added the second, "to imitate Arius's sweet tones and drawling speeches."

"There is more learning in Colluthus's little finger," cried the third, "than in the bull-head of Carponas and the fox-head of Arius combined."

Metrodorus could not understand this singular discussion. Arius must, then, be very popular, since even the market-women talked about him, although all did not admire him. Who were those whom some of them put even above Arius? When they reached a more retired street, he asked Cleobulus:

"Whom were those hucksters talking about so excitedly?"

"If my son were here instead of being with Athanasius, he would be able to explain it better than I. This is what I have heard. As the city of Alexandria is very large, and the number of Christians considerable, the church in which the patriarch was accustomed to instruct the faithful was not large enough to contain the immense crowds that, on certain days, press towards the Christian temples, to the great despair of the pagans, who see their temples more and more abandoned. Several churches have then been built in the quarters most distant from the principal church, each of which is attended by a priest charged with the ministry of the Word. In the West, the bishops reserve to themselves the office of solemnly instructing the faithful by preaching; but in the East, priests frequently receive the power

to explain the Sacred Books to the people. In no place has this power been so freely granted as here, where several churches are served by priests. Arius is charged with the administration of a church called Baucalis; Colluthus and Carponas each govern a particular church, and all three employ their preaching as a means to obtain admiration and greater influence. Theonas complains that they preach the word of man rather than the word of God. Thanks to the talents they possess, they attract the faithful, delighted to hear such eloquent discourses. Each has his partisans; some go into ecstasies over Arius's melodious sentences; others prefer Colluthus's flow of language; many declare nothing could be comparable with the vehemence of Carponas."

"It would seem that Alexandria has not, during my absence, lost its liking for religious disputes. In no other city could we hear hucksters discussing in the open air, and with such vehemence, the merits of those charged to teach them the Christian doctrine."

"Since Arius has put his doctrines into verse, the common people engage in controversy with as much eagerness as the philosophers. It is a universal epidemic. Nothing could be more amusing than the sight of those unfortunates quarrelling about systems of which they understand nothing."

"The people ought to be interested in truth."

"And you, also, give yourself to this whim? Well, then, you have returned to your country in

good time. Everybody reasons and reasons at will. This one is for Arius, the other for the Bishop Alexander and his deacon Athanasius. They prate from morning to night. Do you see those two men standing at the corner of the street? One is a fuller, the other a cobbler. Their conversation seems very animated; let us pass by and listen. I wager they are talking about what my son calls 'the new heresy.'"

Cleobulus was not deceived; as they walked slowly past the two disputants, Metrodorus heard a fragment of their dispute.

"How can you be so stupid," said the cobbler, "as not to see that the Son did not exist until after the Father? Is your son as old as you?"

"But more fool you; you forget that when there is question of the Divine Persons, the words 'father' and 'son' cannot have the same sense as when we speak of men and of their paternity and filiation."

"It's all the same to me; I think you very simple to believe that the Father, God Almighty, made all that we see in heaven and on earth."

"Do you think the world made itself?"

"No; but I am sure the Father did not create flies, locusts, serpents, and crocodiles."

"Why so?"

"Because they are destructive animals, and the Father could not be the author of evil."

"Who, then, think you, created the flies and locusts?"

"The Son."

“But if the Father allowed the Son to create destructive animals, when He could have prevented it, is He not, according to your doctrine, the author of evil?”

“Not at all. He is the author of the Son, whom He charged with the creation of matter, and whom He leaves entirely free to do as he wills.”

“If the Father charged the Son to create matter, we cannot complain of matter without complaining of the Father. Your error springs from a false idea of matter. Listen to my reasoning—”

Metrodorus could hear no more. He was filled with astonishment at hearing such religious discussions amongst the common people; yet he was also delighted, because the art of speaking seemed to be justly appreciated. He hoped that rhetoricians could not fail to be honored in a city where the cobblers themselves forgot their shops and work to give themselves up to dialectics. Thalia shared in her father's joy and surprise. At her departure from Alexandria she had been too young to remark the grandeur and magnificence of that city, and now, all that she saw excited her imagination, and when she compared the cities of Gaul with the capital of Egypt, she was proud of her country. She lent a ready ear to those religious discussions, which even engaged the attention of women, but which Cleobulus laughed at. It seemed to her that she had entered into a new world, in which even women, she among the number, might play a glorious part. She burned with desire to know this

Arius, whose teaching had aroused a whole city, and it seemed to her that it was grand in a man, to create a new system of philosophy and thrill the world by the sole force of his mind. Next to those heroes whose bravery conquers the world, she most admired those who, as founders of schools, are successful in imposing their opinions on men.

"This is the tranquil retreat I have chosen for you," said Cleobulus, pointing to a small house surrounded by a garden, and built upon a slight eminence. It was situated near the sea, at the eastern extremity of the city. Before the door, Philemon and Baucis, holding the keys, awaited the coming of their master. Entering their new dwelling, Metrodorus and his daughter thanked their friend for having procured for them so delightful an abode. From the terrace they had a full view of the two ports of Alexandria, the isle of Pharos, and the open sea, now dotted with fishermen's barks, whose snowy sails were gilded by the rays of the declining sun. Thalia could not adequately praise the beauty of the spectacle. Around the house, palm-trees, fig-trees, flowering acacias, sycamore and orange-trees mingled their various tints and delicious perfumes.

"Neither Ptolemy's palace, nor Nero's golden house, nor Diocletian's magnificent dwelling at Nicomedia, would suit me as well as this house and garden!" exclaimed Metrodorus.

"May you long enjoy it," responded Cleobulus. "It is not as small as that of Socrates, but it will

receive only friends. I will leave you to the pleasure of admiring it, and arranging it according to your fancy. But as Philemon and Baucis will not be able to arrange things as they should and get your supper also, you must share in mine. I shall expect you in two hours."

"You are too kind and thoughtful, my dear Cleobulus, but I do not wish to abuse your friendship."

"You cannot refuse. All is ready for your reception. I left my cook preparing a grand banquet. If this does not tempt you, I will add that in your honor I have invited Arius."

"Oh, thanks!" exclaimed Thalia.

"God grant that my son and he do not pull each other's hair."

"Arius is too well-bred."

"Yes, when no one contradicts him."

"You judge him very harshly."

"He wishes to be talked about. Being unable to make his way by teaching the doctrine of his church, he has invented another."

"Arius is my friend," said Metrodorus. "He has discovered the truth, and I have come to help him to publish it to the world."

"As you please. But you come from a distance, and are doubtless ignorant of what everybody here knows. Arius came here from Lybia, six years ago, at the time when Meletius, Bishop of Lycopolis, deposed by a council for having sacrificed to idols during the persecution, pretended to make his little episcopal city the metropolis of Egypt, in

order to withdraw it from the jurisdiction of the patriarch of Alexandria. This Meletius, joined by several malcontents and by many partisans in the Thebaide, and strong in their support, braved the decrees of the council that deposed him. Arius, who thirsted for fame, and employed all his talents to become popular, at first espoused the cause of the Meletians, believing they should soon triumph over the patriarch's opposition. But when he saw that Meletius was severely condemned by the greater number of the Christians of Alexandria, he declared loudly for the patriarch, who received him with great kindness and raised him to the diaconate, so greatly was he deceived by his artful words, and persuaded that he would one day be very useful to the Church. A short time afterwards, when the patriarch, terrified at the progress of the schism, hastened to cut off Meletius and his adherents from the communion of the faithful, as factious persons and enemies to Christianity, whose unity they would destroy, he learned that Arius secretly blamed his conduct, and concerted underhand plots against him; he was then forced to excommunicate him also, and forbid him entrance into the church. The patriarch, having been put to death by order of Maximian, who persecuted the Christians because Constantine protected them, was succeeded by Achillas, who had been director of the school of Sacred Sciences. Arius took advantage of his goodness to implore pardon, and such were his tokens of repentance, that Achillas

was touched, and, to reconcile him more completely with the Church, raised him to the priesthood. There remained for Arius, then, but one step to the episcopate, and on the death of Achillas, who filled the see of Alexandria only a few months, he flattered himself with the hope of being his successor; but the clergy and people preferred Alexander. Thus, disappointed in his expectations, he began to propagate his system. This he did, at first, in ambiguous terms, in order to elude the patriarch's vigilance; but the old man had near him the youthful deacon Athanasius, as intelligent as Arius, and more learned than he in the Sacred Scriptures and writings of the Fathers. Being unmasked by Athanasius, Arius threw off all disguise, and, having charge of the church of the quarter Baucalis, he there every Sunday disseminates his errors."

"How do you know that his doctrine is false?"

"I cannot answer that question; because, having been for a long time disgusted with philosophy, I do not take the trouble to study any system; but it will be easy for you this evening to obtain from Arius a faithful exposition of his theories. You will also hear my son's response, for he cannot endure any attack on his faith."

"The conversation will be most interesting."

"I hope, at least, that Thalia's presence will not intimidate Theonas. He is not used to being in such amiable company."

Two hours later, Metrodorus, conducted by Phile-

mon, knocked at Cleobulus's door. Warned by the barking of the dog, Theonas hastened to receive his father's guests with the utmost cordiality; but he did not appear struck with Thalia's beauty, neither did he address her any of those vulgar compliments she was accustomed to receive.

Cleobulus's mansion was situated in the centre of the city; from its terraces one could perceive the sinuous course of the Nile, and the vast plains fertilized by its annual inundation. The newly-risen moon, scarcely veiled by a light cloud, shed its silvery rays on the waters below, and on the reeds that swayed to and fro on its banks, moved by the evening breeze. That spectacle brought another vividly before Thalia's eyes, and in thought she wandered to the banks of the Rhone.

"Its waves, too, now glisten in the moonlight; Valerian contemplates them, thinking of me. When shall he command the Roman armies? When shall he be emperor?"

Thalia did not ask herself if Valerian would allow himself, like her, to be fascinated by the novelties of Arius.

While awaiting the signal for supper from the slave who presided in the *triclinium*, Cleobulus received his guests in a hall which perfumed tapers flooded with light. Thalia gave but little attention to the rich decorations of the hall in which Grecian and Egyptian art had mingled their ornaments. She anxiously awaited the arrival of Arius, and as soon as he was announced, her heart beat vio-

lently, as if some inhabitant of a higher world were about to be revealed to her sight. Her imagination invested him with all the splendors of genius. She saw a man of mature age, of great height, of a grave and serious countenance, clothed simply in a long tunic and a large mantle of sombre color. He was thin, with very high forehead, his eyes black and sparkling, his chin heavy. His gait was slow and measured, his smile very sweet, and his voice most musical.

"What happiness to see you again, my dear Metrodorus," said Arius, when he had recognized the rhetorician. "Cleobulus could not have procured me a more agreeable surprise. I knew well that Gaul could not keep you when your country called you. It is we, and not strangers, who should reap the benefit of your eloquence. This is your daughter, no doubt?"

"Thalia, even before seeing you, could not speak of you without the greatest enthusiasm. I hope she may be of the number of your most zealous disciples."

"We cannot fail to triumph when our cause is espoused by beauty and eloquence."

We shall not describe the banquet served up to Cleobulus's guests; suffice it to say that it differed in no way from the sumptuous repasts which the Greeks in their decline,—when their noblest desire was to enjoy life,—prolonged even far into the night.

The conversation turned first on the news of the

day, but Cleobulus soon introduced what was more interesting to Metrodorus.

"How is your friend Athanasius?" asked he of his son.

"He continues to edify the church of Alexandria by his virtues, and instruct it by his preaching."

"It seems that his discourse on idolatry has been very successful. Is he preparing another work?"

"He is now engaged on a discourse on the Incarnation of the Word; I hope it will soon be finished."

"We shall see," said Arius, "if he clearly understands the relations of the Word with God the Father."

"He will not depart from the doctrine taught by the universal church," added Theonas.

"You must be surprised, my dear Metrodorus, at the close intimacy that exists between Theonas and Athanasius. It might be thought that an Epicurean like me, so profoundly indifferent to all dogmas and systems, should have prevented my son from forming such a fervent attachment to the Christian doctrine, and its most brilliant representative, but it is my principle to allow to every one that freedom I desire for myself."

"Might we know the cause of this tender friendship?" asked Thalia, with a mocking smile. Theonas had not once raised his eyes to her, or paid any more attention to her than if she had been absent, and her pride was offended at seeing how little impression her beauty made on him.

“When I was a child,” said Theonas, “I often went to play on the sea-shore with Athanasius and other children of my age who were of Christian family. We all recognized the superiority of Athanasius, who presided over all our plays, and whom we all obeyed as our chief. One day we were playing at ‘bishop,’ and held an election, in which Athanasius was unanimously chosen. We seated ourselves around him on the sand; he delivered a homily with the utmost seriousness, and we listened with all the gravity we could command. It was Sunday. The patriarch had invited all the clergy of his church to a repast, to be given in his house, situated on the sea-coast. From the terrace the patriarch noticed us playing, just at the moment when, Athanasius having asked if any one among us wished for baptism, I had presented myself in order that he might show how well he was instructed in all the ceremonies of the Church. A deacon came to us and said that the patriarch had been watching us with curiosity, and desired our presence. We went, bashful and trembling, persuaded that we were going to be severely reprimanded, but the patriarch’s kindness reassured us. As he questioned us on religion, he was struck at Athanasius’s replies, and offered, if we wished, to receive us into the School of Sacred Sciences. Some days later I entered with Athanasius; since that time our childish friendship has ripened into a sincere and devoted attachment, and we have never been separated, except during three years

which Athanasius spent in the desert, under the conduct of the anchoret Anthony."

"Arius would wish that my son had some other friend instead of the patriarch's favorite deacon."

"I contest neither the talents nor good intentions of Athanasius," said Arius, in slow and modulated accents; "I only regret that he does not clearly understand the nature of the Word."

"It is only those who prefer their particular opinion to the constant and universal faith of the Church who are deceived in that question," replied Theonas.

"Good! The discussion is becoming serious!" exclaimed Cleobulus. "But I do not know the first word about the controversy between Arius and Athanasius, and I suppose Thalia is not more initiated than I in the religious quarrels that stir up Alexandria at present. I then beg Arius to expose to us briefly his system, and I promise to listen as if I myself were interested in philosophical subtleties."

Arius reflected for a moment; then, assuming an oratorical posture, and casting on Thalia a fascinating glance, as if to win her to his opinions, he began thus:

"Of all the problems that have disturbed the human mind, there is none more grave or difficult than that of the origin of evil. All the religions of the East, all the schools of philosophy, have in vain attempted its solution. Nevertheless, one great principle is generally admitted: all the Eastern religions, all the philosophical systems, teach that matter is the principle of evil."

"That has never been admitted by Christians," said Theonas. "They know it is written in Genesis that God created the heavens and the earth; that he considered all material creatures, and pronounced them *good*."

"It is easy to prove," continued Arius, "that matter is the principle of evil. Drunkenness is a sin; could it exist without wine? Theft is a sin; could it exist were there neither gold nor silver? Homicide is a sin; could it exist if man had not a material body?"

"Pure sophism!" exclaimed Theonas. "Evil is nothing but the abuse we make of our liberty. Now, we can abuse spirit as well as matter. A culpable desire is evil as well as a culpable act. If our spirit were well regulated, wine would not be for us a cause of intoxication, nor gold and silver the occasion of theft. It is, then, in the soul we must look for the principle of evil."

"I beg you, my son, not to interrupt Arius again. Let him explain his theory. You may answer when he has concluded."

"Matter, then, has produced evil," resumed Arius. "This principle is the basis of my system, and, if it be contested, I can prove it at length. But who has produced matter? This is what all who have preceded me have been unable to understand; I—I alone—have discovered the true solution of the difficult problem. The Platonians pretended that matter is eternal; if that were so, evil would be eternal. There would have been two principles,

two Gods—one, the author of good; the other, of evil. The absurdity of that system is very plain. Christians and the Gnostics recognize that matter cannot be eternal; but both are deceived in their explanation of how it has been created. I have attained to the truth by applying to the theories of Christianity and Gnosticism the processes of Eclecticism. I have sifted and assorted, and have chosen what was true in the doctrines of some, and rejected the false in those of others. Christians suppose that God created the world directly by His wisdom, His fiat, His word, His Son, equally infinite and co-eternal with Himself; but I cannot admit that God, the principle of good, could have directly created matter, the principle of evil. The Gnostics suppose between the first principle and matter a whole series of decreasing spiritual beings or *Eons*; but such a series seems useless to me, and I have simplified Gnosticism by the aid of Christian dogma. I have brought between God and the world only one being—Him whom the Christians call the Word, the Son, the Wisdom of the Father. With me, the Son is neither eternal nor infinite. God created him directly, and charged him to produce the world, which, being the cause of evil, could not be drawn forth from nonentity by God Himself. The Word of the Christians can be, in my eyes, only the *demiurge* of the Gnostics. God, wishing the world to exist, and being unable to create it without derogating from his dignity, drew out of nonentity the Word, his intermedium, to be his

instrument in the creation of the world. This creature, more perfect than all others, has so intimate a relation with God that we may, if we wish, call him God and adore him as such. He elevated Himself to a degree of incomparable virtue in becoming man and dying for us."

"That's a kind of Minerva leaping forth from Jupiter's head," said Cleobulus.

"Do not jest on so important a subject," said Metrodorus.

"Alas, my father's raillery," said Theonas, "has this time a deep meaning. When Arius declares on one hand that he adores Jesus Christ, and on the other, that Jesus Christ is not God, does he not avow himself an idolater? What is idolatry, if not the adoration of the creature?"

"What I admire in Arius's system," said Thalia, "is its simplicity. It eliminates from the Christian faith that dogma of the Trinity so impossible to understand."

"It replaces that revealed dogma by hypotheses of his own invention, far more unintelligible. Can you understand matter as producing that spiritual defect which we call evil? Can you understand a God who desires the existence of matter despite the evil it will produce? who dares not create it lest He should degrade Himself? who draws out of nonentity an intermedium whom He commands to create the world? Can you understand a simple creature accomplishing an act essentially divine,—the bringing into being by the sole power of his will, that which had no previous existence?"

"Notwithstanding those little difficulties," said Metrodorus, "the system of Arius seems to me very ingenious."

"It would take too long to refute it in detail, and to show how he destroys, not only the idea of the Trinity of Divine Persons in the unity of substance, but also the dogma of the Incarnation, by denying the union of the divine and human natures in Jesus Christ. I shall make but one observation. If the Christian dogmas were a system of philosophy, every one might have a right to add or retrench something therefrom. They would be but a human work, which every man might try to perfect. But it is not philosophical theories, more or less profound, which are the object of our faith. We believe only the truths which Jesus Christ taught his apostles; which the apostles transmitted to the Church; which the Church is charged to spread to the extremities of the world, and to maintain intact to the consummation of ages. We reject all that is contrary to those truths. What does it matter to us if a system be ingenious? As Christians, we wish to believe the doctrine revealed by Jesus Christ, and we can know that doctrine exactly, only through the teaching of the Church."

"By Jupiter, and all the gods whom the human race invokes here below, that is enough of philosophy!" broke in Cleobulus. "We must have something more amusing. Let Metrodorus read us one of his discourses, or Arius sing one of his canticles, or Thalia sweep her hands over the lyre.

Fill your goblets with this Cyprus wine, and let us drink to the health of the Muse the Gauls have restored to us."

"I drink to the success of Arius," said Thalia.

Theonas, for the first time, fixed his eyes upon the young girl. His glance was full of sorrow and compassion; but Arius's eyes, on the contrary, sparkled with pride and delight.

"If the ladies be for us," said he, "who shall be against us?"

During several successive days, Arius held conferences with Metrodorus, always in his daughter's presence. He developed his system in detail, supporting it by texts of Scripture, to which he gave his own interpretation. He assured him that the greater number of the Egyptian prelates shared his opinions respecting the Word, and that he had received congratulatory letters from the principal bishops of Syria and Palestine. He predicted that, in a few years, the new doctrine would have replaced the old, and promised that when his friends should be sufficiently numerous to govern the church and regulate elections at will, he would make Metrodorus bishop of some important see.

"I should be at the height of my ambition," said Metrodorus, "were I to become Bishop of Cyrene or some other city."

"It will be difficult for us to dispose of the episcopal sees of Egypt while the patriarch Alexander has near him that intractable Athanasius; but we may be able to offer you cities more considerable, — Antioch, Cæsarea, or Chalcedon."

"What would I not give to be one day Bishop of Antioch?"

Among the women and young girls who went every Sunday to hear his homilies in the church of Baucalis, Arius had remarked several who might serve his designs. He flattered their self-love, excited their imagination, and persuaded them that they were destined to bring about the triumph of truth. When he could count on their blind devotion, he put them under the guidance of Thalia, who was happy to command the little female army. Nothing could have attached her more strongly to Arius's heresy than the *rôle* he made her play for the gratification of her vanity. She regarded herself as the prophetess of the new religion, spoke to Arius's disciples with an air of inspiration, and communicated to them something of her own enthusiasm. The inhabitants of Alexandria were astonished at nothing, for they were accustomed to the most singular spectacles—to the riotous feasts of Ceres or Apollo; to the processions of the priests of Horus or Isis. Nevertheless, it was not without surprise, that they saw, passing through the streets, Thalia and her companions, singing hymns in honor of Arius. Children, idlers, and laborers followed the excited troupe—the whole city was aroused. Those strange manifestations were repeated every week—sometimes in one quarter, sometimes in another. At times Arius walked in the midst of his fair disciples, whom his presence excited even to delirium. Up to that time the

patriarch of Alexandria had treated Arius kindly, hoping to reclaim him by mildness; but after that tumult raised by foolish women, he saw it was necessary to act with decision. Arius assuredly merited excommunication. To avoid every appearance of prejudice, the patriarch resolved to convoke all the bishops of Egypt, and to leave the cause of the heresiarch to their judgment.

One evening, when Arius came to sup with Metrodorus, the latter took occasion to congratulate him on the success of the female processions organized by Thalia.

"The patriarchate of Alexandria shall be the just reward of your zeal for the good doctrine; but how shall we ever recompense your incomparable daughter?"

"I have no ambition, save for the triumph of truth," said Thalia.

"I would wish to have the power of immortalizing your name. I have written a long poem, in which I have exposed my system more clearly than I was able to do in the songs composed for the people. Allow me to dedicate to you this poem, and to entitle it with your name."

"How proud I should be to have it thus descend to posterity!"

Arius unrolled a long strip of parchment, and, as delighted with himself as if it were a masterpiece, declaimed with amusing pomposity, the prologue to his "*Thalia*," a poem in style somewhat similar to his hymns:

"Herein is the glorious science
Which shall everywhere be known ;
Herein is the true belief
Of those whom God doth own ;
Of His saints and elected ones
Who the heavenward path have trod,
In the ways of light and joy,
Ever led by the Spirit of God.
Hear what they unto me have revealed,
Unto me who their steps retrace ;
Their science and truth are mine,—
Woe to me, if I hide this grace ;
I, among the wise renowned,
Mine own honor have forsworn ;
For the glory of the Lord
Many insults have I borne.
Let all who this poem read,
Accept the truths it imparts ;
For by God himself 't is inspired,
Who dwells in my inmost heart."

Arius did not think it necessary to inform Metrodorus's daughter that the debauchees of Alexandria gave the name of *Thalia* to the bacchanalian reunions of young men, as also to the couplets intended to be sung at the end of a feast. Sotades, an obscure poet, had already published, under the name of *Thalias*, songs, whose only recommendation was their obscenity ; and Arius's new poem resembled one, by its rhythm, and sometimes by its style, of his shameful verses.

Arius had foreseen that by giving the name of *Thalia* to his versified exposition of theological systems, he should gratify the self-love of the rhetorician's daughter, who would prove her gratitude by distributing the poem with indefatigable zeal.

Nor was he mistaken. In a short time all the women of Alexandria had a copy of the *Thalia*, numerous passages of which they committed to memory and sung to the air of the songs of Sotades.

Thalia was triumphant. She was then immortalized in a poem destined to be renowned! She was intimately associated with Arius in his great work! Her life was not to be spent in that obscurity which usually falls to the lot of woman!

But another pleasure awaited her in the following letter received from Valerian:

“Be happy, my dear Thalia; your prophecy is realized. Our gracious Emperor has just appointed me to the command of a legion in the army of his son Crispus. We are to march against the Franks, who have revolted. It is for me to show myself worthy of your affection and to distinguish myself by some brilliant action. I leave Arles without regret, for since your departure it has had no pleasure for me. May the God whom we serve soon conduct me to Alexandria. Remember me to your father, and do not you forget one whose thoughts are ever with you.”

“Thanks for thy favors, O Fortune!” exclaimed Thalia. “What a future awaits me! This hand shall yet bear a sceptre, and compel the world to obey me. Woe to him who shall reject the doctrine of Arius!”

Suddenly the thought occurs to her—Will Valerian consent to renounce his faith and refuse to adore Jesus Christ? For a moment she is troubled, but, throwing off her anxiety, she murmurs: “If he loves me, he will share my faith.”



CHAPTER VI.

THE CHURCH AND THE THEATRE.

THEONAS was deeply afflicted at the progress of Arianism, and beheld with grief the active part taken by the daughter of his father's friend in the propagation of heresy. He ordinarily avoided, with most scrupulous reserve, the society of women, which Arius sought, with all the ardor of a chief of a sect, desirous to gain to his cause those auxiliaries so easily deceived and led. Theonas, listening only to his zeal, resolved to see Thalia and endeavor to inspire her with better sentiments. She, on the contrary, thought that he had at last been overcome by her beauty, and she would not have hesitated to lead him to love her, in the hope of inducing him to accept Arius's doctrine. She did not for a moment imagine that Theonas was touched only by the wanderings of her soul.

"You astonished me most profoundly the day before yesterday," said he, after they had interchanged a few commonplace remarks.

"What did I do that surprised you?"

"I saw you at the head of that troop of women who parade through the city singing the praises of Arius."

"You might have seen me there last week, and you shall see me again in a few days."

"That is not your place."

"And why?"

"The daughter of Metrodorus the rhetorician, should not thus make an exhibition of herself in the streets and public places."

"Because we are women must we remain inactive, when the truth demands that all who know it should unite their efforts for its triumph?"

"And do you not fear you are deceived in taking for truth vain systems contrary to the doctrine of the Church?"

"My reason tells me I am not deceived. There cannot be two increated beings, the Father and the Son."

"There could not be two different natures equally increated, but there can be in the same divine nature several distinct persons; in like manner you cannot have two souls, while you can have in your soul many distinct faculties."

"But if one of the Divine persons be engendered, he cannot be as ancient as the other."

"Why not, if he be engendered necessarily, and, by consequence, eternally? But I did not come to enter into a theological discussion with you. Allow me only to ask you if you do not show too much partiality for those new opinions that now agitate men's minds? Do you go to hear Athanasius preaching in St. Mark's as frequently as to listen to Arius in the church of Baucalis?"

"I must acknowledge I have never yet heard this young orator who is so highly praised by his friends."

"We admire less his rare talents than the orthodoxy of his doctrine. He invents nothing; he only preaches what has been believed everywhere and always in the Church."

"If his eloquence be as great as people say, how can he resign himself to remain within the same circle of ideas, and to continue repeating what others have said before him?"

"Talent does not consist in inventing novelties, but in presenting, under new forms, truths which, precisely because they are truths, are unchangeable."

"That is too restricted a field for genius."

"Besides, the preacher must not speak in order to display his talents, but to fulfil his mission and continue the teaching of Jesus Christ."

"Will Athanasius preach next Sunday?"

"Most certainly, and I beg you to be of the number of his auditors, were it only to prove that you have no party spirit, but sincerely seek the truth."

Thalia gave the required promise. Theonas felicitated himself on the success of his ruse, convinced that she would not be able to resist the persuasive eloquence of his friend and the strength of his reasoning, for he was not sufficiently experienced to know with what obstinacy some persons attach themselves to error. Thalia had heard Athanasius

spoken of too frequently not to be desirous of knowing and estimating of herself the energy, precision, and clearness of his style, but she could not be other than a prejudiced listener to the patriarch's secretary. It was currently reported that he had returned from the desert with habits of excessive austerity—that he was most severe with women, whom he would not allow to testify any admiration for him. Metrodorus was anxious to know if he observed faithfully all the rules of rhetoric; if he concluded the different parts of his discourse by a telling phrase; if his delivery was as skilfully modulated as that of some actors, and if he lost his voice at times, as if stifled by the ardor of his enthusiasm. He might have known that Christian orators in general, and Athanasius in particular, did not pique themselves on their resemblance to rhetoricians; they preferred simplicity to bombast, and their homilies were only grave and familiar discourses to their auditors.

Metrodorus and his daughter had some difficulty in finding a place in St. Mark's Church, so great were the crowds that flocked thither to hear the holy deacon. With the Christians came many pagans, who were allowed to remain until the dismissal of the catechumens, when only those remained who had been baptized and could assist at the celebration of the Sacred Mysteries. When they had sung the accustomed psalms, and had heard read the parts of the epistle and gospel marked for that Sunday, Athanasius appeared in

the ambon. To Thalia, he, at first, seemed in no way remarkable. He was of medium height, very thin, and slightly stooped; his features were fine and delicate. Intelligence shone in his large eyes, his heavy eyebrows indicated the strength of his will, while his countenance expressed the sweetness and benevolence of his disposition. But when she perceived his modest deportment, his grave and majestic gestures, his clear and melodious voice, his well-chosen and concise sentences, delivered, not with the art of the rhetoricians, but with that ardor which springs from conviction, she understood what influence could be exercised over the faithful by that orator who forgot himself, to think only of the doctrine he was charged to teach.

Athanasius, addressing himself first to the pagans, traced rapidly the history of idolatry and proved its falsity. He established the spirituality of the soul and its immortality; then, from the knowledge of the soul, he raised himself to the knowledge of God.

"The soul may imbibe from the contemplation of material objects a just idea of God, for created things, disposed with admirable order and agreement, are like letters revealing to us the Lord and Creator. They have, in some sort, a voice which speaks of Him. God, who is so good, and who so loves men, takes care of the souls He has created. As by His nature He is invisible and intangible, as He infinitely surpasses all created substance, He has, by His word, so marvellously arranged all material

nature, that although He cannot himself be seen by men, He may, at least, be known to them by His works. We often know an artist by his works, even when we do not see himself. Thus it is that we recognize the genius of the sculptor Phidias, in the perfection of his statues, though he himself is absent. We see him in seeing them. God cannot be perceived with the eyes of the body, but the world, which is His work, reveals to the eyes of the soul His creative power and infinite wisdom. . . . Who can contemplate the immense vault of the heavens, the course of the sun and moon, the revolutions of the other planets, their relations and differences, and the invariable order which all observe, without being convinced that they have not created themselves, that they are governed by Him who created them? Who can behold the sun rising at dawn; the moon dispensing her light; each day rising and increasing for a determinate time, by an immutable law; the planets revolving in their orbits through space; the stars maintaining their position in the firmament; yet not be convinced that He who has created all, has, with infinite wisdom, regulated the movements of all? . . . Since, throughout the universe reigns order, and not confusion; since on no part thereof is there trouble and discord; since everything is disposed with regularity and most perfect harmony, we are obliged to raise ourselves in thought to God, who has brought together elements so numerous and so varied, and made all concur to the same end. Al-

though God cannot be seen by us, nevertheless we can easily understand, following the order and concord of things the most contrary, that they have the same Creator, the same Master, the same Governor."

"How does God govern the world?" asked St. Athanasius. Answering himself, he said:

"In a choir composed of a great number of persons,—children, women, youths, old men,—one sole head presides and directs the chant, and while each sings according to the nature of his voice, all together form an harmonious concert. In our body, our soul causes all our senses to act. It is by the impression of our soul that, in presence of an object, the eye sees, the ear hears, the hand touches, the nose smells, the taste enjoys, the feet walk. In a great city, governed by the prince who built it, all the inhabitants feel his presence and obey his orders. Some cultivate the fields, others carry water; these go to the Senate, those enter the Church. The judge ascends his tribunal, the artisan plies his trade, the physician attends the sick, the architect erects buildings—all is done by the presence and command of the prince. These are feeble images of what goes on in the universe governed by Divine intelligence. By the power and action of the Word, who regulates all that exists, the heavens move, the stars revolve, the sun illumines, the moon passes through her orbit, the winds blow, the lofty mountains stand, the sea rolls, the fountains play, man is formed, he lives and dies. The Om-

nipotent Word of God gives motion to and governs all things, and a host of others which we cannot mention, since they are innumerable. He gives light and life, and preserves the unity of the world. Invisible forces are subject to his action; He is their Creator. His providence gives them life and governs them. Through it our bodies grow; through it, also, the reasonable soul is endowed with intelligence and activity. Thus the Word of God, by a simple act of His power, puts in motion the visible and invisible forces."

Then Athanasius explained the mystery of the Incarnation, and showed how, through love of us, the Word became flesh, and assumed our nature fallen from primitive innocence.

"To the Word it belonged to establish anew, free from corruption, that which was corrupted, and to save all that the Father desired to save. For, as He is the Word of the Father elevated above all, He alone could restore all things, suffer for all, and represent us all near His Father. Behold why the Word, who is incorporeal, who is not united to matter nor subject to corruption, has come among us, from whom He was not previously far removed, for no part of the world was free from His presence. He existed with His Father and filled all space. He came, then, because of His goodness to us, to show Himself in our midst. Seeing the whole human race perishing, overpowered by death and corruption; seeing that the sentence fulminated by God condemned us to death, and desiring that

those whom He Himself had created should not be destroyed, He took pity on our race and our infirmity. He assumed a body like to ours: it was His will not only to be or to appear in a body, but He assumed our body; He assumed it pure and stainless in the womb of a virgin, in whom there was no spot or stain. Being omnipotent and the Creator of all things, He formed in the Virgin Mother's womb a temple, that is, His own body, and using this as His instrument, He became man for our sakes, dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory,—the glory of the only-begotten of the Father. When He had taken a body like to ours, as all men were subject to corruption and death, He offered His body to His Father, and delivered Himself to die for all men with infinite love. Hence all men are dead in Him, and the sentence pronounced against men has been executed. It exhausted all its strength on His divine body, and cannot attack men who have become His brethren. Thus has He drawn men forth from the corruption into which they were plunged. He has redeemed them from death to life by the body He assumed. The grace of His resurrection has banished death forever from them, as fire consumes straw. The human race would have perished, had not the Son of God, Master and Redeemer of all, come to put an end to death."

Athanasius proved the divinity of Jesus Christ by reviewing the miracles He had operated during His life, and by showing His triumph over death and idolatry.

“Since our Saviour is risen, death is no longer terrible. All who believe in Christ would rather die than deny their faith; they know most certainly that in dying they do not perish, but that they shall live and become incorruptible in the resurrection. . . . Such is their contempt for death, that they run to meet it with marvellous promptitude, and become witnesses of the resurrection by which our Saviour has conquered death; even young children hasten to meet death. And not men alone, but even women scorn death. Yea, even women, who, first deceived by death, now laugh at it as having neither strength nor power. When a tyrant, vanquished by the legitimate king, lies prostrate, bound hand and foot, all the passers-by mock at him and no longer dread his anger. Now, our Saviour, on the cross, bound death hand and foot, all Christians who pass by tread it under foot; they render testimony to Christ; they brave death, and cry out in tones of triumph: ‘O death, where is thy victory? O hell, where is thy sting?’

“When did men begin to abandon idolatrous superstition, if not when the true God, the Divine Word, became man? When did oracles cease in Greece and throughout the world, if not after He had appeared in the world? When did the gods and heroes sung by the poets begin to be despised as common men, if not when our Lord had made of His death a trophy by His resurrection, rendering incorruptible the body He had assumed? When were the fraud and fury of the demons contemned,

if not since the Word, taking pity on man's weakness, appeared among us? When did the wisdom of Greece become but folly, if not when the true wisdom of God made Himself known to the world? Formerly, in every country, men adored only idols; now that senseless worship is abandoned everywhere. They run to Christ, whom they worship as God, and they arrive through Him to the knowledge of the Father whom they know not. O prodigy more admirable still! formerly each country had its idol, which was not adored beyond its frontiers, and which, nevertheless, was regarded as the Sovereign Lord of all things. Now Christ alone is adored everywhere and by all nations; there are no limits to His worship. He has done what impotent idols could not do; He has caused Himself to be accepted by the entire world. He is adored as God, and as the only God, and by Him are men brought to the knowledge of the Father."

The people listened with religious attention to those proofs of the divinity of Jesus Christ, exposed with so much clearness and sublimity. Suddenly the silence was broken. A female voice interrupted the orator and struck terror into the faithful by the cry,—

"Christ is not God! Christ is only the most perfect of creatures!"

Thalia's audacious exclamations produced inexpressible confusion. The women near her recoiled in horror, while the men indignantly pointed to her.

"Out with blasphemers from the holy place!"

"The sacred mysteries must not be given to the dogs!"

"Let women keep silence in the church!"

Metrodorus, terrified at his daughter's boldness, and fearing that the people would fall on her with blind fury, extended his arms towards her as if to protect her.

"Pardon her; it is my daughter! . . . She is deranged."

Thalia, proud of the tumult she had excited, stood immovable, and, far from excusing herself, continued to brave the crowd.

"I defend the honor of Almighty God. Arius alone teaches the truth. . . . Arius alone should be believed."

Athanasius commanded the deacon to dismiss the catechumens, but the words of dismissal could scarcely be heard amid the confused din. The catechumens, overwhelmed with consternation, went forth; the pagans followed, and formed into groups outside the church. Some applauded the young girl's courage, others were indignant at her effrontery. Thalia was obstinate enough to wish to remain until the end of the Divine Mysteries, which she would disturb by the scandal of her presence; but her father begged her to leave, and almost dragged her away in spite of herself. As she passed on, some young pagans followed her, either to admire her beauty or to defend her should the Christians threaten to attack her; but she traversed the

city with a slow and haughty step, and reached her house without danger.

When silence reigned again in the church, Athanasius concluded his discourse by conjuring the faithful not to allow themselves to be seduced by the new heresy, and by exposing the manœuvres of Arius. He made no allusion to what had just happened, but emotion gave to his voice an accent which caused his audience to shudder. He spoke of the heresiarch with eloquent indignation.

"Arius holds among his partisans the place of Jesus Christ; he is to them what Manichee is to the sect of the Manicheans. Instead of Moses and other saints, they have found as chiefs, Sotades, for whom the pagans themselves blush, and the daughter of Herodias. Arius imitates the profligacy and effeminate taste of that profane poet, in composing, like him, *Thalias*—that is, songs to be sung at feasts—and he has taken as his model that danseuse, in leading himself the dance in mockery of our Divine Saviour, by the blasphemies he causes to be sung against Him. . . . Certainly, we have reason to be surprised that among so many ecclesiastical authors who have composed treatises and pronounced homilies on the Old and New Testaments, we have never found any who published *Thalias* or explained our mysteries by these kinds of songs. The pagans themselves, who have had no restraint, have never employed them. The Arians alone sing them for amusement over their bottles and glasses, and excite one another to

laughter by the noise and tumult they make in their criminal dances. This admirable Arius, who proposes to his imitation nothing grave or majestic, but openly declares he ignores all the examples of virtuous men, draws from other heresies all that is most pernicious, and proposes as the object of his emulation only Sotades' shameless poems. Arius has thus revealed the softness of his effeminate soul and the corruption of his mind; for men, according to the oracle of Wisdom, reveal the thoughts of the mind by the words of the mouth."

Theonas was inconsolable for having been the involuntary cause of the scandal given by Thalia's blasphemies. This, then, was his punishment for having thrown off his customary reserve. Distressed at the inutility of his zeal, he related humbly to Athanasius all he had done to influence Thalia to come and hear him, in the hope that she would be enlightened by his preaching.

"Cease all communications with that haughty young woman," said Athanasius. "The more you argue with her the more will you strengthen her obstinacy. Misfortune alone can draw her back to the true faith."

When Arius learned what had transpired in St. Mark's Church, he felicitated Thalia on having given a public proof of her spirit of independence, but advised her to be more prudent for the future.

"We must concert measures very skilfully. The synod convoked by the patriarch is about to open,

Already nearly one hundred Egyptian bishops have arrived at Alexandria. Athanasius will, most assuredly, paint me to them in the blackest colors. Your daring interruption has, doubtless, deeply wounded his self-love, and he will avenge himself."

"Can you not count on numerous friends among those bishops?"

"They dare not declare for me. Were the synod to be held in another city they would, perhaps, be more courageous, but here they will nearly all take sides with the patriarch. There are, nevertheless, two bishops from Lybia who will not desert me; but what are two voices among a hundred?"

"What is the synod going to do?"

"It will try to make me retract."

"Will you consent?"

"Never."

"What then?"

"Then the synod will excommunicate me."

"And what will you do?"

"I shall protest, and demand to be judged somewhere out of Egypt. I shall thus make a noise and gain time."

The synod of Alexandria, presided over by the patriarch, was solemnly opened. Nearly one hundred bishops from Lybia and Egypt took part therein. They summoned Arius and interrogated him. The heresiarch denied none of his errors. He declared that he did not regard the Word as a Divine Person equal to the Father in all things,

but as a creature drawn forth from nonentity before all others; that Jesus Christ was not truly God, but that one might give Him that title because of His close relations with the Divinity. On hearing from his mouth propositions so contrary to Catholic doctrine concerning the Trinity of Divine Persons, and the Incarnation of the Word, the Fathers of the synod pronounced excommunication against him. They equally anathematized his partisans, who already formed a numerous sect, among whom were numbered seven deacons, an equal number of priests, and two Lybian bishops. Arius was artful enough to cause himself to be pitied as a victim unjustly condemned. With what apparent tranquillity and affected resignation did he communicate to the rhetorician and his daughter the result of the deliberations of the Council of Alexandria!

“Are you not afraid to receive an excommunicated person into your house?”

“You shall ever be our friend,” said Metrodorus.

“And a great man!” exclaimed Thalia.

“They have, then, dared to condemn you?”

“Athanasius urged them on. Who could have thought that such a great number of venerable prelates would have allowed themselves to be led on by a young man? I had on my side only two bishops from Lybia.”

“My poor friend, I sincerely pity you.”

“I am not to be pitied. It is written: ‘Blessed are they who suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake.’”

"Will you not preach any more in Baucalis?"

"Entrance to the Church is forbidden me. But we shall hold secret assemblies. We shall teach in the dark what we cannot proclaim in open day."

"The entire city will be aroused on learning such wickedness," said Thalia. "They will not calmly allow their most eloquent orator to be silenced."

"Athanasius does not fear to irritate the numerous friends I have made among the people; some day he shall pay dear for his imprudence."

Arius's excommunication aroused in Thalia's heart spite, anger, hatred, and the most evil sentiments. Her passion amounted almost to delirium. She felt herself personally humiliated by the condemnation of one whose orthodoxy she had publicly proclaimed in presence of his adversaries.

Metrodorus judged the situation more coolly; he dreaded entering on the road of error, and sought for means of honorably withdrawing himself.

"It may be, after all," said he to his daughter, "that Arius is wrong."

"What! You also, father, will you abandon him? It is in misfortune, especially, that we must be faithful to our friends."

"My house shall always be open to him; but it seems to me that a hundred bishops would not have condemned his doctrines had they not been contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church."

"Those hundred bishops think themselves obliged to side with the patriarch, who is led by Athanasius. That the sentence of the council may really express

the faith of the Church, Arius must be judged out of Egypt."

"If one judgment after another might be called for, disputes would never end."

"Let them condemn nobody, but leave every one to his own opinion, and there would be no more disputes."

"How could the Church allow to be taught as Christian doctrine that which is only personal opinion?—that which contradicts the truth revealed by Jesus Christ?"

"Athanasius is not the Church. So long as Arius shall not have been condemned by the Bishop of Rome and a council composed of bishops from all the provinces of the empire, we must remain firmly attached to his system. We must require that Arius have full liberty to teach."

Thalia's resentment did not confine itself to words. The partisans of Arius held secret assemblies to concert measures for avenging their chief, and provoking a great manifestation in his favor. It was decided that they should arouse the lower classes, and that two imposing processions—one of men, the other of women—should walk through the most populous quarters of the city, complaining of the injustice of the patriarch of Alexandria. Carponas was charged to organize the agitation among the workmen of the port and the idlers and loungers about public places, who welcome every tumult as a distraction. But all his endeavors could muster only a handful of men, who, trying to make as

much noise as if they were ten thousand, with all the strength of their lungs, re-echoed his cries of, "Arius is innocent!"

"The deliberations of the council were not free!"

"We will protect Arius in spite of the patriarch!"

Nevertheless, Corponas's procession, far from arousing popular favor, would have only served to draw ridicule on Arius and his partisans, had not the female fanatics, led on by Thalia, come to their succor by their number and enthusiasm. Never had Alexandria, even during the most pompous feasts of Isis, beheld in her streets such a multitude of women and young girls, whose ranks increased the farther they advanced. The curious gathered round them, the idle followed the disorderly procession; the whole city seemed afoot. On every side rose shouts and cries from the women, which were taken up by the crowd, intoxicated with its own disorder.

"Arius is the guide of our souls!"

"His enemies are enemies of the true God!"

"We will not allow injustice to vanquish him!"

The innumerable host of women halted before every magistrate's dwelling, crying out:

"Protect Arius from the patriarch's tyranny!"

"It is a judge's office to oppose injustice!"

"Let Arius be left free to teach in the church of Baucalis!"

The magistrates hesitated in presence of such a general uprising. Some, wearied with the tumult, thought it would be more simple to let every one

teach his system in a city in which all religions and every philosophy had their representatives, but others understood that, though Arius was free to leave the Christian community and combat its dogmas, he could not be free to remain a member against its will. The Council had the right to excommunicate him, that is, to declare he was no longer in the communion of faith with the Christians. He was free to found a sect or a new religion, but he ought to be prevented from entering the Church wherein Jesus Christ, whose divinity he denied, was adored as God. The Governor of Alexandria could think of no means of quelling the tumult, the principal actors in which were women, whose obstinacy would, he feared, lead to the effusion of blood were he to employ armed force; he then concluded to leave them unmolested during the day, hoping that at night they would disperse to their homes, and that there their delirium would be calmed. But long before nightfall the disturbance ceased, and ceased at the bidding of one man.

A word passes from mouth to mouth; the whole city takes it up, Arius is forgotten, the ranks of the double procession disperse, the women are abandoned by the crowd and forced to silence, the bulk of the people wend their way to the southern part of the city.

"Who has arrived?" demanded Thalia, irritated at seeing her manifestation in favor of Arius so suddenly ended.

"The great solitary Anthony is here."

Curious to see that extraordinary man, to whom the whole city flocked whenever he appeared, Thalia bade the women disperse. She followed the crowd in the hope of getting near Anthony, but already thousands pressed around him. The pagans themselves and their priests joined in the cry of the Christians:

"We want to see the man of God!"

This was the name which everybody gave him; many tried to touch the hem of his garment, persuaded that a virtue came forth from him. The solitaries who accompanied him wished to disperse the crowds that prevented his passage, but he said, with a tranquil countenance:

"They are not more numerous than the demons whom we combated on the mountain."

When he saw the immense crowds that surrounded him on every side, he raised his hand to enforce silence, and, in a clear and sonorous voice, uttered the following words, which even reached Thalia's ear:

"What folly has taken possession of you, O inhabitants of Alexandria? Have you ever before seen wise men tumultuously following infatuated women? Must an old man come to put you to the blush for your conduct? Do not force me again to leave my mountain to reproach you for your lightness. Allow not yourselves to be deceived by the sophisms of Arius or the intrigues of his partisans. Listen not to what that blasphemer dares to say of the Word. The Son of God is *not* a creature; he

is the Wisdom of the Father. We cannot say without impiety, that there was a time wherein He did not exist. Have no communication with the Arians, because there can be no alliance between light and darkness. You are Christians, and in adoring Christ you are in true piety and true religion, but the Arians, in saying that the Son of God is a creature, differ not from the pagans who adore the creature instead of the Creator. How could you embrace error, when God has given you, for your instruction in the true doctrine, an angel of light, my dear son, the deacon Athanasius, who will be one day your patriarch. Hear him, love him, defend him against his enemies."

"Long live Athanasius, the apostle of Christ's divinity!" exclaimed a voice in the crowd.

Immediately the people responded with cries of:

"Arius is a blasphemer!"

"Woe to those who divide the Church by schisms and heresies."

They brought to the holy solitary great numbers of sick and possessed persons, on whom he invoked the name of Jesus Christ, and restored them to their parents, free from any disease.

Thanksgivings rose on every side, and both Christians and pagans conjured him not to leave Alexandria again; but in vain.

"I have fulfilled my mission among you. The Spirit of God drew me out of my solitude, to reproach you with your temporary wanderings. You

will not again unite with those who revolt against the authority of the Council which condemned Arius. You will confess the divinity of our Redeemer. Have you not just been witnesses of the power of His name? If Jesus Christ were not God, should I have been able to cure the sick by invoking on them His sacred name? I return to my mountain. Do you remain in peace in your homes."

The crowd, with religious respect, made way for the venerable man, and, followed by the solitaries who accompanied him, Anthony returned to his desert. After his departure the immense concourse dispersed, and the streets of Alexandria resounded with cries far different from those that had filled them but a few hours previous.

"Anthony says we must hear Athanasius! Arius is a blasphemer!"

Thalia was confounded. That day, which was to have been so glorious for Arius, had completed his shame. Instead of increasing the number of his partisans, it had emboldened his adversaries. Who had overthrown the plans of the sectaries and drawn to himself all the people who had risen in favor of Arius? An unknown old man, destitute of eloquence, with untrimmed beard, sunburnt face, and garments as miserable as those of the most austere Stoic. By what right had that man, who had neither wealth, science, nor power, spoken so authoritatively to the people? And that multitude, whom Arius could not convince, had heard An-

thony with respect and obeyed him with pleasure! "O fickle populace! O vile troupe!" exclaimed Thalia, angrily. She forgot that Anthony was recommended to the consideration of the people by two merits, to which Arius could not pretend. In his youth, Anthony had possessed great wealth, but entering one day into a church, just as the deacon was reading these words of the gospel, "If thou wilt be perfect, sell what thou hast and give to the poor," he, in his desire to attain perfection, literally fulfilled the precept; sold all his goods, distributed the price among the poor, and retired into the desert. There he had been favored by God with the gifts of prophecy and miracles. Arius had not given his wealth to the poor, neither had he the power of working miracles; how then could he speak to the people with as much authority as Anthony the solitary?

But a still more painful humiliation awaited Thalia. Mimics and buffoons were then giving in Alexandria, as well as in all the great cities of the empire, dramatic representations, which had nothing in common with the tragedies of Sophocles or Euripides. They were gross buffooneries, full of allusions to current events and daring personalities. The finest verses would not have been so amusing to the populace as those trifling comedies. They flocked to those representations, in which the mimics, who improvised at least half of their *rôles*, provoked their laughter by the most grotesque gestures and the boldest jests. About this time it was

made known, by placards and public announcements, that a new play would soon be produced, under the title of *The Thalia of Thalias*, the subject being Arius's quarrel with the Christians. They were not afraid to introduce into the scenes, Arius and the rhetorician's daughter. The mimics charged to represent these two persons carried so far their study of resemblance that, on their appearance, the spectators made the theatre resound with their shouts of pleasure and applause.

The first to appear was Arius, conducted by Thalia, who uttered shrieks of grief.

"My father has lost his reason; I come to consult the high priest of Osiris."

The hierophant appeared, and told Thalia that her father should be cured if he would but steal from the Christian temple their little god Logos.

Arius and Thalia entered the Christian temple, and when they came forth the young girl held in her arms a little child. But the news having spread among the Christians that the god Logos had been stolen, they set out in quest of the thief. Arius and Thalia knew not what to do with their burden: they wished to hide it in the temple of Jupiter, but the priests of that deity would not receive it. They offered it to the priests of Isis with no better success. They were about to throw it into the Nile when they were met by the poet Sotades, half drunk.

"My daughter! my daughter!" cried Sotades, pursuing Thalia, who fled from him, "I find you at last! Come to the arms of your father."

"Wretch," responded Arius, "this girl is mine and not yours."

"Oh, I recognize her very well," continued Sotades. "Her name is Thalia; I am the father of all Thalias."

Arius threatened him with a stick.

"Help!" cried Sotades. "This old man is robbing me of my daughter!"

The Christians came; they found their Logos in Thalia's arms.

"This is the thief who has stolen our god!"

"This is he who has stolen my daughter!" cried Sotades.

He seized Thalia by the right hand; Arius grasped her left. She let Logos fall, and it broke into a thousand pieces. The Christians, indignant, fell on her with sticks, while Arius and Sotades vainly tried to defend her. When she was dead they fled in terror. Sotades and Arius both wept over the young girl's corpse; then they both began to quarrel, and finally strangled each other.

Such was the amusement which, during a month, delighted the citizens of Alexandria.

Thalia was wounded to the heart by the audacity of the mimics who had dared to expose her to the laughter of the crowd; but what surprised her most was that Arius, who had not been spared, far from testifying displeasure, rather seemed pleased.

"How can you endure with so much calmness so great an injury?"

"All that I desire is that they speak of me and

my doctrine. The mockeries of the mimics will not render me less celebrated than Athanasius's invectives. It is necessary, above all, to make a noise; nothing could be more injurious to my cause than silence."

"Mocked at the theatre, excommunicated by the bishops, how can you live happy in Alexandria?"

"I do not intend to remain here."

"You will leave us?"

"My flight will be the beginning of my victory. I shall retire near a bishop more powerful than the Patriarch."

"Are you going to Rome?"

"That would be imprudent. It is impossible to make a new opinion accepted by the Bishop of Rome. I am going to Nicomedia, whose bishop, Eusebius, is wholly devoted to my doctrine. He will protect me against the Councils. I know no man more skilful and powerful."

"Why cannot I follow you?"

"It would be better for you to remain here. I need a devoted friend to inform me of all that happens, favorable or unfavorable, to my cause in Egypt. Then, when Eusebius shall have pronounced in my favor, it will be well to raise here another disturbance against Athanasius."

"Rely upon the thirst for vengeance which consumes me, after all the humiliations to which I have been subjected."

Before leaving Alexandria, Arius renewed his promise to Metrodorus to make him patriarch of

Antioch, when his party should have the ascendancy, which, said he, would be before long. But the rhetorician was daily becoming wiser, and could not, like Thalia, be blind to evidence — had it not been for her obstinacy, he would have quitted the Arian party; but she was the last link that bound his heart to earth, and he could not raise between her and himself an impassable barrier. A reasonable number of persons assisted at his declamations, wherein, in order to avoid wounding any one, he prudently avoided declaring either for or against Arianism. Nevertheless, it seemed to him that his efforts to please everybody were not appreciated, and that he received but indifferent admiration; hence he regretted the sympathetic audience that had flocked to hear him in the Rome of Gaul.

“My daughter, should not we have been happier at Arles?” asked he of Thalia on one occasion.

“It was not I who urged you to come here.”

“Ah, could I but have foreseen the future!”

“Do not yield to discouragement. We shall both realize our dreams. To be worthy of fortune’s favors, we must bear uncomplainingly her trials.”

“My ambitious dreams are vanishing; I ask nothing more of fortune.”

“And I shall ever ask a throne.”





CHAPTER VII.

VICTORY.

ARIUS had not exaggerated the aid which Eusebius of Nicomedia would be able to give to his doctrine. Arianism would have speedily disappeared, had not this bishop embraced it and employed, to the very end of his life, all his craft and influence in its favor. Eusebius of Nicomedia was, in the fourth century, a finished type of the ambitious prelate and courtier. Already, nearly a century before the definite triumph of Christianity, when the Church and State were completely separate, when one could not seek the episcopate without being exposed to all the severity of persecution, the public honors rendered to that office, as to the highest religious dignity, had seduced more than one vulgar ambitious mind. Men, such as Paul of Samosata, had been known to make religion the stepping-stone of their pride, attaining by intrigue the episcopacy, and seeking in the most sacred functions only the satisfaction of their self-love. When peace and liberty were given to the Church, a great number of ambitious men aspired to ecclesiastical dignities only to win an honorable position in the world; for, from the publication of

Constantine's edict, the bishops were surrounded with much greater honors and far less danger.

Eusebius of Nicomedia was descended from a family connected by several alliances with the imperial house. Of a turbulent and domineering spirit, a character at once yielding and obstinate, he was naturally eloquent, and possessed, in a rare degree, an aptitude for intrigue. Of this he gave the first proof by causing himself to be nominated bishop of Berytus, in Phenicia, without conforming to the ordinary rules of election. But he was too desirous of acting a great part in the theatre of the world, to remain long content with so unimportant a see as that of the little town of Berytus, now called Beyrouth. When the see of Nicomedia became vacant, the faithful and clergy of that city were not free to give their suffrages in favor of a priest most worthy by his knowledge and virtue of being raised to the episcopate. Thanks to the credit he enjoyed at the Eastern court, Eusebius, violating a second time the laws of ecclesiastical discipline, abandoned the humble church of Berytus to fill the episcopal chair of Nicomedia, one of the most important of the empire. Repulsed from Rome by that mysterious power which had removed from there the Cæsars, Diocletian had fixed his residence at Nicomedia, which city he rebuilt and embellished with a rapidity and magnificence of which the late transformation of Paris can give but a faint idea.

"Here are palaces," says Lactantius, "there a

circus; here a mint, there an arsenal; here a dwelling for the empress and another for her daughter. A great part of the city was thrown down all at once, and the inhabitants, with their wives and children, had to fly, as if the city had been taken by assault. And when those edifices had been completed at the ruin of provinces, the Emperor would say: 'That is not good; let us make it another way.' They would tear it down again, and the second building was not secure from a second demolition."

History does not inform us who was the prefect charged with the adorning of Nicomedia, neither was his name given to any boulevard.

Licinius, the master of the East after his conquest of Maximian, usually resided at Nicomedia, and that city remained the second capital of the empire until Constantine transformed Byzantium and gave it his own name. Eusebius, being near the Emperor and his sister Constantia, enjoying all the privileges of a bishop at court, easily believed himself raised above all the other bishops of the East. Hence, to show he had a right to receive favorably all those whom the patriarch of Alexandria had excluded from his communion, he invited Arius to Nicomedia. Seconded by such a bishop, Arius persuaded himself that he might henceforth struggle with equal strength against Athanasius, and oblige the patriarch to permit his entrance into the Church. Eusebius made no distinction between Arius's doctrines, but adopted all as if they

had been his own work. Their novelty attracted him, and he saw therein a means of distinguishing himself from the other bishops, becoming the head of a party and ruling over the Church. The heresiarch and his protector concerted measures for imposing their opinions on the Christian world.

“So long as they allow themselves to be led by the sophisms of Athanasius they will not comprehend the originality of my theory.”

“A Council has condemned you,” added Eusebius; “have yourself absolved by a Council.”

A man of deeds rather than of words, Eusebius hastened to convoke in council all the bishops of Bithynia, who feared him too much to oppose his designs. They wrote to the patriarch of Alexandria, and the greater part of the bishops of Palestine and Asia Minor, demanding that the excommunication pronounced against Arius and his adherents should be revoked, and that they should be received to communion; they wished that the impunity granted to their persons should be extended even to their errors. When the patriarch of Alexandria saw the formidable activity displayed by the Arians in surprising the good faith of some, and abusing the weakness of others, he opposed to them an activity still more marvellous. He drew up an account, which he caused to be signed by all the bishops of Egypt and Cappadocia, and wrote, besides, more than a hundred letters, to be sent to the most distant provinces of the empire, wherein he acquainted the Christian world with the true state of

the affair, and related how the conduct of the Arians had obliged him to cut them off from the Church. "The holy doctrine of the apostles," said he, "is become food for their censure. They take up arms to make war on Jesus Christ, His divinity, and the ineffable glory He possesses with His Father. They seem to have no other end than to acquire reputation with the Jews and pagans, so much pains do they take to advance their errors. . . . They endeavor, by every means, to excite the raillery of the enemies of our religion, and daily foment against it seditions and persecutions. They fill the tribunals with the noise made by the miserable women whom they have seduced, and render our holy religion ridiculous by the agitation which they provoke by having the young women of their cabal parade backwards and forwards a hundred times through the most public places. They cannot endure that any one should compare them with the ancients, and they believe themselves equal to those who have been our masters and teachers from our infancy. . . . If we believe them, they alone are wise, they alone are poor, they alone have found the true doctrine. They boast that to them alone have the greatest mysteries been revealed, which no man could have discovered in any place soever under the sun. Impious pride! extreme fury! extravagant vanity! . . ."

Arius was somewhat disconcerted by this letter, when Eusebius showed it to him, and asked himself what impression it would be likely to produce

on Thalia, seeing that the female processions which she had so zealously directed were stigmatized before the whole world. The pagans laughed at them; the Christians would be indignant.

"In that letter," said he to the Bishop of Nicomedia, "I recognize the inspiration of Athanasius. All our efforts will be fruitless so long as that ardent defender of Christ's divinity shall not have been expelled from Alexandria."

"We have opposed Council to Council," replied Eusebius. "We must now have recourse to stronger means, by putting our doctrine under the protection of Licinius. He will soon be sole master of the empire, and will oblige the Church to believe what we believe."

Eusebius was the first to have recourse to the temporal power against the spiritual authority, but his example has been followed by all heresies and schisms. The triumph of Arius was, however, at that time, the last thought of Licinius, who aspired to far different victories. Jealous of the superiority of Constantine, in whom all the hopes of the Christians centred, and whom they saluted as their liberator, Licinius, already incapable of wisely administering the eastern provinces, dreamed of becoming sole master of the empire. His late defeat still galled him, and he wished by a new feat of arms to retrieve his tarnished glory. Fearing Constantine as much as he hated him, he would willingly have rid himself of him, but Constantine, guarded by the affection of his people, idolized by

his soldiers, feared not the poniard of the assassin.

While awaiting a favorable opportunity for declaring war, Licinius employed every secret means for giving to his side the advantage of numbers in the coming struggle. He relied on the pagans, who were discontented at the liberty granted by his rival to the Christians, and his morals, as well as his political interests, led him to constitute himself the defender of the old Greco-Roman polytheism.

Had Eusebius possessed, in the slightest degree, sentiments worthy of a bishop, he would have blushed to implore the protection of one who, in order to please the pagans, had publicly practised idolatry, and caused the effusion of Christian blood in many provinces subject to his dominion; for Licinius had published edicts of proscription, which, in several cities, were executed with atrocious cruelty. During this renewal of persecution, which was not to be of long duration, the Christians showed a courage worthy of the most illustrious martyrs. The recital of the deaths of the principal victims passed from mouth to mouth; but what won the most admiration was the moving account of the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste.

The governor of that city, Agricola, unworthy to bear that name immortalized by Tacitus, summoning the soldiers under his command, said to them:

"I have received from our Emperor, the divine Licinius, severe edicts, which I shall rigorously put into execution. It is forbidden to any soldier

to exercise the Christian religion. If there be any among you who have abandoned the religion of their forefathers, let them repent of their folly and adore, for the future, the gods — the protectors of the empire."

When he had read Licinius's edict, forty soldiers stepped forth from the ranks, and presented themselves before him. After having bowed their heads with that respect due to their chief, they said:

"We are Christians."

"Adore the same gods as are adored by our divine Emperor, or I shall put you to death with most frightful tortures."

"We are Christians."

"Let them be scourged to blood!"

The forty Christian soldiers underwent, without a murmur, the bloody flagellation.

"Will you sacrifice now to Jupiter, the great and good?"

"We will remain faithful unto death to Him who died for us."

"Tear their sides with iron hooks."

It was done, and their blood flowed in streams upon the ground.

"See the reward you reap for your obstinacy," said Agricola. "Renounce, then, those Christian superstitions, and offer incense to our gods."

"We look for no greater happiness than to shed our blood for Jesus Christ."

"I will cause you to be burned alive."

"We fear only the fire of hell."

By a refinement of cruelty, Agricola condemned the courageous combatants to the torture of cold. It was the depth of winter, and the mountains around Sebaste were covered with snow. Near the wall stood a large pond, frozen so hard that heavily-laden carriages could pass over it in safety. On this pond the Governor ordered the forty soldiers to be exposed, after being stripped of their garments, and, the more severely to tempt them, he caused warm baths to be placed near the pond.

"When you are tired of bearing the cold for your Galilean," said the judge, "you may go to the warm bath. That will be a proof that you recognize your folly, and are willing to adore the gods of the empire."

"While our bodies are being frozen, the love of Jesus Christ will warm our hearts."

Guards were stationed around the pond to keep watch during the night. The holy martyrs divested themselves of their garments, and stretched themselves on the ice, with their eyes fixed on heaven.

"Courage!" cried they to one another. "One night of torments will purchase for us an eternity of delights. Lord, we are forty engaging in combat, grant that we may be forty crowned."

Their limbs shivered, the blood froze in their veins, the pulsations of their hearts grew more and more feeble. Their guards, moved with pity for their sufferings, urged them to yield.

"Obey the Emperor's orders; come, enter into the warm bath."

One of the forty, overcome by suffering, just as he was about gathering with his brethren-in-arms the palm of martyrdom, left the pond and threw himself into the bath; no sooner had he done so than he expired.

A sentinel, standing by the bath, saw in the heavens, angels holding over the martyrs forty crowns. "Why forty," said he, "since there are only thirty-nine? But the fortieth shall also be placed on a victorious brow." Throwing off his clothes he placed himself on the ice, crying: "I, also, am a Christian!" Thus were forty crowned.

In the morning, the judge ordered their bodies to be laid on wagons and carried to the fire to be burned to ashes. The executioners, perceiving that the youngest was still living, took pity on him and left him behind. But his mother, unable to endure the thought that her son should thus be deprived of the martyr's crown, took him in her arms, and put him into the wagon, saying: "Go, my son, proceed with thy companions on this blessed journey; it shall not be said that thou wert the last to present thyself before God!" The son of that heroic mother expired on his way to the pile, and his body was burned with those of his martyr-companions; part of their ashes was thrown into the river, but the rest was purchased of the executioners by the Christians.

Eusebius of Nicomedia could not have been ignorant of the cruelties exercised against the Christians by order of Licinius, yet he dared to

entreat that Emperor to declare himself the protector of Arianism. Presenting himself in the sumptuous palace built by Diocletian, yet enjoyed by him so short a time, he saw Licinius surrounded by fallen women, idolatrous priests, diviners, soothsayers, and magicians. Those representatives of expiring paganism were predicting for him the most brilliant destiny if he would but reestablish idolatry, and abolish the Christian name.

"You may declare war against Constantine," said one; "your sacrifices to Mithra assure you the victory."

"Jupiter the Thunderer," said another, "will crush with his thunderbolts those who have overthrown his altars."

"I have watched the flight of birds, and have inspected the entrails of victims: all the signs are favorable."

"The Egyptian hierophants have evoked the inferior gods, and have received oracles from the superior: all predict a brilliant triumph."

"Olympus is not now divided as in the time of the Trojan war: Venus and Juno are leagued together against the impious Christians who insult them."

"Isis and Osiris, Ormuz and Ahriman, Baal and Astarte, all the gods of Egypt, Persia, and Phœnicia unite with the gods of Greece and Italy to protect the restorer of their worship."

Eusebius joined his flattery to that of the diviners, fortune-tellers, and idolatrous priests.

"Most powerful Emperor," said he to Licinius, "heaven will grant you victory if you honor the Divinity under some name by which He is invoked. You need not persecute any form of worship practised in your empire, but may gradually mould all into one."

"Christians are too exclusive!" cried Licinius. "I will not accept their God while they do not receive mine."

"That is true; but the most enlightened among the Christians—and I flatter myself with being of their number—propose so to modify their religion that all others may be merged into it."

"How will they do it?"

"Very simply. All religions recognize one God, superior to all others. We agree with them in this: we adore one only God, all-powerful, eternal. The difference is only in names. Him whom we call God, you name Zeus—that is, the principle of life—or Jupiter; that is to say, God the Father. It suffices, for a mutual understanding, to cease the discussion on names."

"But Neptune, Apollo, Mars, Juno, Diana, Ceres, and all the other gods?"

"We may accept them by considering them as the divers names of creatures superior to man, whom we call angels. The most perfect creature is he whom we style the Word, the Son of God. If you wish to call him Apollo or Mars, do so until you come to recognize with us that the name of Word or Son is more suitable and simple."

"It is not your worship that shocks me most. Will your morals always be so severe? Will you always condemn pleasure? always preach penance?"

"Our morality is even more simple than our dogma. Every man, we believe, is bound to do all the good of which he feels himself capable. Matter is the principle of evil. It does not depend on us to have a material body; consequently, all that the material body desires and accomplishes does not depend on us."

"That is a reasonable kind of Christianity. If this simplification is your own idea, I congratulate you."

"The originator of this system is a Lybian priest called Arius, whom I recommend to your kindness. He has been expelled from Alexandria for having taught what I have just explained to your divinity."

"We must make him bishop."

"It would be an excellent choice. He would labor zealously for the conciliation of all forms of worship."

"But there are many things in the organization of Christianity which I should wish to modify."

"Probably we could accept those modifications."

"And, first, I would forbid the bishops to visit one another or to meet in council."

"In fact, a bishop should never leave his flock: he does not need his brethren's advice for its government."

"I will publish a decree forbidding women to

assist at the holy mysteries at the same time with the men."

"We might build separate churches for the women and men: that would, perhaps, be more proper."

"Why do you not hold your assemblies in the open air? Extensive plains are more suitable for the public worship of the Divinity than narrow temples."

"What would hinder us, on certain festival days, from performing our religious rites in the open air?"

"I see we understand each other. I shall be obliged to declare war against Constantine. If I be victorious —"

"You will be."

"I promise to make the whole world conform to your new Christianity. Let all those who are of your mind declare for me and help me to triumph over my rival."

"You may rely on our devotedness."

It was not long before war was declared between the rival emperors. Constantine, in a campaign against the Goths, pursued those barbarians through Mœsia and Thrace, the boundaries of the two empires. Licinius reproached his colleague with having invaded his territory. Constantine replied that it would be much better for him to aid in repelling the incursions of barbarians than to spend his time in cowardly persecuting the Christians. Hostilities were begun.

The Empress Constantia was deeply grieved; for the struggle would be fatal either to her husband or

her brother, whom she loved tenderly. Constantine had been generous after the battle of Cibalis, but would he not be provoked by this new attack? And should Licinius be victorious, what fate was reserved for the liberator of the Christians? Eusebius of Nicomedia was more assiduous than ever in paying his court to Constantia; for, being a prudent man, he was anxious to have a protector in favor with Constantine should Licinius be betrayed by fortune. He advanced, to the best of his power, the interests of his protector, but, at the same time, he made no parade of his zeal, and concealed his plots, that he might not afterwards be compromised. He exhorted all his friends to show their patriotism, saying how shameful it would be should the East allow itself to be vanquished by the West. He did not ask himself if it would not be yet more shameful should Christianity, represented by Constantine's army, be overthrown by paganism, represented by the forces of Licinius. Blinded by his personal interest, he offered prayers for the triumph of an idolatrous emperor, who had just published edicts of persecution against the Christians, labored secretly to procure him soldiers, and employed spies to keep him informed of the movements of Constantine's army.

Thalia received from Arius the following letter :

"O dearest and most illustrious of my disciples, great events are preparing for us. Thanks to the wonderful skill of the Bishop of Nicomedia, we have found in Licinius a zealous protector. He

is about to declare war against Constantine, whose troops, in contempt of treaties, have invaded the provinces of the empire under pretext of pursuing the barbarians. This war, which will be formidable, must not terrify us; it is necessary to the triumph of our cause. If you hear it said that Licinius fights for the pagans, do not believe it; it is for us he combats. When Eusebius explained to him my system of the Word, he was struck with that simplification of Christian dogma, at once so original and so clear, and was convinced that my system alone, can bring the pagans to the knowledge of the true God, and lead to the religious unity of the world. Hence, when victory shall have brought both the East and West under his sceptre, he will openly profess my doctrine, and will compel all the churches to accept it. Then shall the pride of the Alexandrian patriarch be humbled, then shall Athanasius no longer dispute against me. I shall return in triumph to that Egypt from which I went forth excommunicated. It would be impossible to praise sufficiently the reception given me by the Bishop of Nicomedia; no one could be more friendly and hospitable. But he is a man of action who has no taste for poetry; hence he does not appreciate, as much as I had expected, the poem which bears your name, and which is, assuredly, my masterpiece. I have not shown him two new canticles which I have composed, one for the washerwomen and the other for the curriers, in which I have expressed very concisely the fundamental point of my doctrine. I will show them to you when Licinius's victory shall have afforded me the opportunity of seeing you. If you learn anything respecting the movements of Constantine's army, acquaint me of it. The decisive moment for our cause is at hand, and we must display our

devotedness. With all my heart I desire you may enjoy the same health of body, the same peace of mind, as
ARIUS."

Thalia, in reading this letter, did not experience that joy with which Arius had hoped it would inspire her. She was more deeply attached than ever to his doctrines, and detested alike the pagans and Christians, for both had humbled her. With all the strength of indomitable pride, she longed for the day that should behold Arius reëntering Alexandria, escorted by the Emperor's soldiers, to impose silence on the pagans and compel Athanasius, in turn, to fly from Egypt; but, at the same time, she thought of Valerian, and dared not pray for the success of Licinius.

"Is it, then, possible," said she, "that my ambitious dreams shall not be realized? Shall I never become empress? What will happen should Constantine be conqueror? He will reserve to himself the supreme power, and even should he consent to share, it would only be with his sons. What will be the result should Constantine be overcome? Never would Licinius declare as Cæsar one of his generals. Ah! did Valerian but serve the Emperor of the East the purple would assuredly be his. We cannot ask him to abandon Constantine's flag; he would prefer death to the dishonor of treason. After all, it is better as it is. If Licinius be victor, he will receive most favorably so gallant a commander, thanks to the support of Arius and the Bishop of Nicomedia."

While Thalia was thus a prey to the tortures of anxiety, she received a letter from Valerian.

"I shall soon be nearer you, my dear Thalia. It is a month since I left the banks of the Rhine, and I shall soon leave the plains of Thessalonica, where I am at present encamped, to direct my march to the borders of the Heba. Please God, we shall soon meet on the banks of the Nile. Your father, crowned with the laurels of eloquence, will allow me to present myself to him covered with the laurels of war. May I also be free from dangerous wounds. Up to the present, the enemy's fire, which I have often even imprudently braved, has fallen only on my buckler, a happiness which I doubtless owe to the fervent prayers you daily address to Jesus Christ, our Redeemer and our God.

"The days I have spent in Crispus's camp have been the most happy of those passed away from your joyful presence. This young prince is possessed of all his father's virtues, without any of his defects. It would be impossible to know him without loving him. One feels that his youth must have been spent under the guidance of his holy ancestress, the pious Empress Helena. The whole army is edified by the firmness of his faith, which he owes in a great measure to his master, the celebrated Lactantius, whom Diocletian had called to Nicomedia to teach rhetoric, and to whom Constantine confided the education of his eldest son. I thank heaven for having had the opportunity of knowing Lactantius; he is here in the camp with Crispus, who is unwilling to be separated from his master, because, as he says, he will always have something to learn. There is no one at the present time who speaks Latin more purely than he; hence

he has been surnamed the Christian Cicero. Every evening Crispus invites the generals to his tent, where Lactantius reads to us some parts of a work he is about to publish on the death of the Persecutors. His words make us shudder, while we admire how God, in His justice, punishes, at the moment of death, those tyrannical emperors who, during their lives, have abused their power by condemning to death the adorers of Jesus Christ. Licinius has dared to renew the cruelties of Galerius and Maximian. He shall be punished like them. I rejoice at the thought that I shall fight in the foremost ranks of the army that is marching against him to accomplish the decrees of God's justice. Lactantius is engaged in a great work on Christianity; it will be impossible for the pagans who read it in good faith not to be converted to the Gospel. What sublime thoughts are contained in this book, and in what magnificent terms are they expressed! Now, that the era of persecution is over, the Christian spirit, after having reformed manners, will elevate eloquence and poesy, which paganism has so sadly degraded. Our writers will instil new life into expiring arts, by causing them to breathe in a purer atmosphere.

"We have also in the camp the poet Optatian, who is much beloved by the young prince, and with him I have formed a sincere friendship. Notwithstanding his talent, I do not think he will ever become famous, for he abuses his wonderful facility, and loses his time in trials of strength, instead of aspiring to the higher fields of poesy. No one could be more successful than he in the composition of acrostics, anagrams, and verses which may be read either from the right to the left, or from the left to the right. He composes very good enigmas, which Lactantius excuses the more readily, because

in his youth he was accustomed to do so himself. How many times, after having supped, have we spent hours in trying to solve them! These literary amusements distract us, for the moment, from the labors and fatigues of war. Our campaign against the Franks was most laborious. It is not easy to conquer that warlike people. To do so requires continual vigilance and indomitable courage. If the helm of government ever passes into a weak hand, the Franks will pass the Rhine and establish themselves in Gaul. Animated by the example of Crispus, we performed prodigies of valor, and compelled the Franks, though superior to us in numbers, to fly before us. They demanded peace, and instead of abusing our victory, we treated them as enemies worthy of the Romans. With what paternal pride did Constantine press Crispus to his heart when he went to give an account of his triumph, and show him the spoils of the vanquished enemy! The whole court was moved on hearing his recital, given with touching modesty. The haughty Fausta alone seemed to hear only with vexation the son of Minervina, Constantine's first wife. I fear very much that this jealous woman will never forgive Crispus for having, while still so young, acquired so much glory and made himself so much beloved by a father who is so justly proud of him. A medal has been struck to immortalize Crispus's victory over the Franks. On the face the young prince is represented holding an eagle, the symbol of victory; on the reverse, Christ seated, holding in his left hand a cross, while his right is extended in the act of blessing the world. Around the edge are the words, 'Christ is the salvation and hope of the republic,' which expresses the faith and gratitude of the prince and his soldiers.

"By the invocation of Christ we have conquered the barbarians ; by the invocation of Christ we shall conquer Licinius.

"Had it not been for the war which this cruel persecutor has so unjustly declared against Constantine, and which will put an end to his tyranny, I should have returned to Gaul, of which Crispus has been appointed governor. But the prince is gone to Athens, to take command of the fleet, and I have been obliged to come to Thessalonica, where the Christian army is encamped, awaiting the word of departure. One hundred and twenty thousand infantry and ten thousand cavalry are to march on Adrianople, where Licinius has assembled his forces. He prefers to await our attack, but he shall soon see what can be done by a valiant army, which carries on its Labarum the Cross of our Saviour. Pray, my dear Thalia, that our victory may not be purchased too dearly, and that it may hasten the moment of our happy reunion.

"*VALERIAN.*"

This letter did not diminish Thalia's anguish. The struggle between her pride which attached her to Arianism, and the love that bound her to Valerian, became more and more bitter.

"He still loves me tenderly," said she ; "but what will he do when he knows we are no longer of the same faith ? He adores Christ, and I do not recognize Him as my God. Will he renounce his error, or will he remain as obstinately attached to it as I am determined to be to the truth ? Nothing in the world could induce me to deny what my reason has recognized as the truth. It is Valerian who must be convinced. He cannot give a

better proof of his love than by accepting my belief."

Thalia was no longer Christian since she had been ensnared by the sophisms of Arius; she felt not that the love of Jesus Christ enchains the soul with links at once so strong and sweet, that woman's love cannot break them.

Valerian's letter gave the number of soldiers about to march under Constantine's orders. Thalia remembered that Arius had begged her to acquaint him with all that she might learn concerning the enemy. Should she reveal what Valerian had confided to her? She hesitated for a long time, but at length persuaded herself that everything was permissible that might further the good cause. Since she had betrayed her faith, could she be faithful to her love? Hence she wrote to Arius telling him the force that Constantine had at his disposal, and that the army was about to leave the plains of Thessalonica to march on Adrianople. This information Arius transmitted to the Bishop of Nicomedia, who, in turn, communicated it to Licinius, to show how zealously he served his interests.

Licinius had assembled on the heights that overlooked Adrianople, one hundred and fifty thousand infantry and fifteen thousand cavalry, and having so advantageous a position, he felt confident he should be the victor were his rival to attack him. But nothing could deter Constantine, who resolved to give battle, persuaded that the Cross of

Jesus Christ would again assure to his army the victory. He formed a choice battalion, composed solely of Christians, the flower of the army, and commanded by Valerian; to this battalion he entrusted the Labarum, which was to be borne wherever the struggle was most bitter. When this sacred standard was carried before the ranks, the soldiers greeted it with shouts of joy, and begged to be led to battle.

"Long live Christ! Long live our Emperor! Victory be ours!"

Licinius, surrounded by his pagan generals, his magicians, diviners, pythonesses, and priests of the false gods, whom he had summoned from the most celebrated temples, made a mockery of Constantine's piety.

"Of what help to him will be that figure of the gibbet, on which was crucified that Jew whom they have made their God?"

"Constantine would be less daring, did he know of the oracle recently delivered by the Pythian Apollo:

"When on its banks the Hebra shall behold
A hundred thousand combatants appear,
Then shall one master the world's sceptre hold;
Then, too, shall sacrilege fast disappear."

"In a dream, I have seen the son of Constantius Chlorus pierced by the javelin of a Numidian horseman.

"Yesterday, an eagle hovered for a long time over Adrianople; then suddenly swooping on a

crow flying from Constantine's camp, he tore it in pieces with his powerful talons."

"To render the gods more favorable to us, let us immolate a hecatomb to Jupiter Victorious."

During the night preceding the combat, Licinius, who represented paganism enthroned, on the eve of its final struggle, went to a sacred grove surrounded by his *cortége* of augurers, magicians, and hierophants. Innumerable torches lit up the scene, and a hundred oxen were slain according to the ancient rites by the priests of Jupiter. When the idolatrous sacrifice was over, Licinius, turning towards his generals, said:

"Friends and companions-in-arms, we have rendered solemn homage to the gods of our forefathers. The sacrilegious man we are about to fight against has insulted the divine protectors of the empire, and despised the holy customs of our ancestors. He offers incense to a strange divinity, whose shameful image is traced on his standard. It is less against us than against the gods of the empire that he has taken up arms. Jupiter is about to punish him, and he has chosen us to be the instruments of his vengeance. Let us show the universe what can be done by Romans faithful to their worship, to their laws, and to the customs of their ancestors."

"Death to the traitor who has renounced the worship of our paternal gods to adore a crucified Jew!" exclaimed the generals, and their cry was repeated by the tribunes and centurions.

"Jupiter will fight for us!"

"The West shall submit to Licinius!"

The two armies were separated by the Hebra, but Constantine had discovered a ford which would render easy the passage of the troops through the stream. To deceive the enemy, he caused a bridge to be built at that point where attack seemed to be most difficult, and over this a part of the troops marched. These were immediately attacked by the forces of Licinius, and the battalion that carried the Labarum, although entirely surrounded, fought with superhuman courage. It seemed at length about to yield to force of numbers, and the standard-bearer recoiled as if to give the signal for retreat, but Valerian, wresting it from his grasp, bore the Labarum forward, escaping unhurt amid a shower of javelins. While these valiant combatants were opposing, with heroic resistance, all the enemy's efforts, Constantine ascended the Hebra, and, with the rest of his army, passed over the ford. He fell suddenly on the flank of Licinius, and the attack being wholly unexpected, he threw his ranks into disorder. The defence of the bridge was abandoned, and the victorious shouts of Constantine's troops rent the air, while the enemy fled in dismay.

Licinius fled first to Byzantium and then to Chalcedon. Constantine continued in pursuit and vanquished him in a second battle. Constantia, becoming the mediatrix between her brother and her husband, by her tears, obtained the pardon

of Licinius, who made his submission to the victorious Emperor. Thessalonica was assigned him as a place of residence; but, unable to resign himself to humiliation, he began again his rebellious intrigues. To put an end to his treason, Constantine ordered him to be strangled. In his anger, he decreed the same fate to the son of Licinius, a child of eleven years, who thus unjustly perished a victim of his father's treason. Constantine, alas! beholding the whole world subject to him, yielded to the terrible intoxication of absolute power.

Eusebius of Nicomedia saw all his plans overthrown by the defeat and death of Licinius, but he was not a man to be easily discouraged. He had already ingratiated himself with Constantia, and hoped, through her good offices, to find favor with the conqueror. He ought, it would seem, to have shared the fate of Licinius, whose accomplice he had been, but his craft saved him. Constantine, after his victory, resided first at Nicomedia, and Eusebius found his way into the court as easily as before: there was only a change of emperor, and he flattered his new master as he had flattered the old. Constantine was well aware that Eusebius had been his enemy; but his sister had disposed him to pardon him, and the Bishop's powers of adulation completed the conquest.

After a short stay at Nicomedia, Constantine went to Rome in triumph, but he did not ascend the capitol to render thanks to the gods. The greater number of the Eastern cities sent deputies

to congratulate him on the victory that had rendered him sole ruler of the empire.

"My dear Metrodorus, would you like to go to Rome?" asked Cleobulus, when there was question of the choice of the deputy for Alexandria.

"What to do there?"

"To harangue the Emperor in the name of our province."

"Oh, yes, father," cried Thalia; "let us go to Rome. Let us leave this city where buffoons are permitted to make a mockery of a defenceless woman, and where the new doctrine finds only enemies."

"But I cannot go to Rome unless Alexandria choose me as her delegate to the Emperor."

"She will choose you; I can answer for that. The honor was offered me, but nothing could be more repugnant to my tastes. I was then entreated to name an orator whom I thought worthy of representing us at Rome, and I answered I knew of none but you."

"You are, in truth, a devoted friend."

Metrodorus was, in fact, chosen to deliver at Rome, in the name of Egypt, the panegyric of the Emperor. Thalia forgot all her past vexations.

"I shall see Rome, the city of grand memories, the Eternal City! I shall be near an emperor, an empress. To reign in Rome, . . . what dream could be more glorious? . . . Valerian will, doubtless, be there. I long and yet I fear to meet him. He will know that I am no longer of the same faith; I shall see if he has still the same love."



CHAPTER VIII.

CRISPUS AND FAUSTA.

WHEN Metrodorus was chosen by his fellow-citizens to congratulate Constantine in their name, he gave himself up again to the dreams of ambition. Fortune was again smiling on him. She offered him an opportunity of rendering himself illustrious — it was his part to take advantage of it. With what care did he compose his discourse! What efforts did he make to be worthy of his subject! As soon as he had composed a sentence, he delivered it aloud, the better to judge of its harmony. When it grated on his ear, he would retrench a word here, add another there, until the whole seemed perfectly harmonious. He deliberated long on the choice of an epithet, on the means of replacing a common expression by an ingenious periphrase, on the suitability of a quotation from Homer, an exclamation from Demosthenes, a maxim from Plato. His ambition was to surpass in elegance all the other orators, and knowing that Constantine spoke Greek very well, he even hoped to be praised, in turn, by him whose eulogy he should have pronounced.

When Arius learned that Metrodorus was coming to Rome, he wrote to compliment him, and to ac-

quaint him with the condition of his affairs since the defeat of Licinius.

"Do not think," said he, "that we are discouraged. Eusebius, whose skilful address I admire more and more every day, has been able to ingratiate himself with the new master of the world, and hopes to use Constantine for the triumph of our doctrines, as he would have used Licinius. He has formed another intrigue, whose success will further ours. He earnestly begs you to be unsparing in your praises of the Empress Fausta, if you wish her to think you eloquent. She is the idol of the day. Incense must be lavished on her. Eusebius is delighted at the empire she has already acquired over Constantine, and thinks it will be easy to obtain everything through the daughter of Maximian Hercules. Rejoice!"

Metrodorus eagerly profited by the hint, and the eulogy on Fausta was the most finished part of his discourse. He compared the Empress in turn to all that is most precious in the three natural kingdoms, to the greatest goddesses of Olympus, and to the angels who preside, under the orders of the Lord, over the government of the celestial spheres; he felt confident that among so many comparisons, there would be one, at least, which would flatter her self-love. When he had finished his discourse, he reviewed and corrected it. When, in fine, he was satisfied with its matter and expression, he and his daughter set out for Rome, accompanied by their two slaves, whom they treated

with so much kindness that they felt no desire for freedom.

They engaged apartments in a house in the neighborhood of the Quirinal Hill, and no sooner did Valerian hear of their arrival than he hastened to offer his services. With what joy did he find himself once again, as at Arles, in their company, and, in the hope of passing delightful hours with them, he thanked heaven for having granted him that meeting with Thalia sooner than he had expected. He perceived no change in her. Her majestic beauty had lost nothing of its brilliancy; her eyes had still the same ravishing glance; her voice the same melodious accents. But she seemed more serious than formerly; the smile hovered less frequently on her lips, and a slight shade of sadness passed at times over her beautiful features. But Valerian perceived not those tokens of secret anxiety, and the very depth of his own happiness prevented him from suspecting that Thalia had any secret trouble. He could not sufficiently admire by what a succession of unexpected events he had been brought from the frontiers of Gaul, and she from the shores of Egypt, to meet each other in Rome; and he loved to think that Providence protected his love, at the same time that it watched over the safety of the Roman empire.

Metrodorus had not much difficulty in persuading Valerian to give them the details of his life since the day he had bid them adieu on board the vessel that was to bear them to their native land. Thalia's

heart throbbed more quickly when he related how, after their departure, Arles became insupportable to him; but when he spoke of Rhodania, whose features had recalled her whose absence afflicted him, and told how skilfully she wielded the chisel—showing at the same time the cameo she had given him—she felt an emotion of jealousy. Might she not well fear a change in human affections—she whose affection for God was so sadly changed? Might not she, who was so unfaithful to Jesus Christ, dread lest Valerian should some day prove faithless to her?

But for the moment she could not doubt the affection of the young military tribune. To please her he related the most interesting episodes in his campaign against the Franks, and in the two battles fought against Licinius with a boldness which success justified. He related his conversations with Lactantius and Optatian, and lauded the courage, purity of morals, and solid piety of the young Prince Crispus.

"I hope, dear Metrodorus, that you will know more of our young prince. You would be charmed by his gracious manners, and you would, with me, think him most accomplished."

"Does he appreciate eloquence more than warriors usually do?"

"If he had no literary tastes, Lactantius, his master, would not say he is his best work."

When Valerian had given his account, with that animation which happiness inspires, he urged Thalia

to relate, in turn, what had befallen her since their separation. She felt that that was not the moment for declaring she had abandoned the Catholic Church to become the most active propagator of the doctrines of Arius. She had promised herself to tell everything to Valerian at the first moment of their interview, but that haughty courage, of which she had given such proofs in the streets of Alexandria, seemed suddenly to have deserted her, and she felt abashed before him, who was as faithful to God and his prince as to her whom he believed worthy of his love. When she should have made the fatal avowal, she should, perhaps, have to resign the sweetness of being so tenderly beloved; it would cost her too much to trouble now that pure affection which appeared before her clothed with new charms, after the tedious days of separation. Hence she replied evasively to his questions.

“Our life has been calm and uniform. Egypt felt but little of the war which has given Constantine the empire of the East. The inhabitants of Alexandria have no more agreeable amusement than to hear the declamations of the rhetoricians or to discuss philosophical systems.”

“I have heard that there has been some commotion raised by a new sophist, whose name is Arius, I believe. It seems that this blasphemer renews the heresy of Paul of Samosata, and denies the divinity of our Redeemer. Has he disturbed all Egypt, as they say? Do you know him? have you heard him?”

"He is one of my father's friends."

"Really! You ought to know, then, if he is a dangerous man."

"We must not believe all that we hear," replied Thalia, blushing. She felt that she was acting the part of a coward by not telling her thoughts, or by not speaking more openly in defence of Arius. But she could not decide on making so promptly, a declaration which might entail painful consequences, and she wished, gradually, to prepare Valerian for a full acknowledgment. With a violent effort to conceal her emotion, she added:

"How often do phantoms, which seem terrible at a distance, cease to frighten us when we get a closer view of them!"

"What is the basis of Arius's doctrine?"

"It would be difficult for me to explain it clearly. I only know that he teaches that God could not have created evil."

"We all believe that."

"And that the Word is above all creatures."

"That is our faith also."

"That there can be but one God."

"We say the same."

"You see, then, that he is not so dangerous."

Metrodorus began to feel anxious. Were Valerian's questions to become more precise, his daughter would be embarrassed how to answer him. He hastened to introduce a new subject.

"Before I deliver my discourse to the Emperor,

I would be very glad, Valerian, to submit it to your judgment."

"I will hear it most willingly. It will remind me of the time when I used to applaud your declamations at the theatre of Arles."

"You will tell me your opinion candidly?"

"I esteem your talent too highly not to add, if it seem necessary, criticism to eulogy."

Metrodorus read his discourse with his usual vehemence, attaching due value to each expression, and pausing after those parts in which it seemed to him he had best succeeded.

"What do you think of it?" asked he, with a self-satisfied air, when he had concluded.

"It is a fine specimen of eloquence, and I am confident the court will be charmed with it. I find therein your usual eloquence, your ingenious comparisons, your skilfully modulated phrases. I would have preferred a little more simplicity, but this pompous style is perhaps more suitable when we address the Emperor. I shall make but two observations: you do not mention Crispus, and you speak too much of Fausta. Your eulogy on the Empress is very exaggerated."

"They say she loves praise."

"That is no reason why you should lavish it on her. Do you believe she deserves to be borne on the clouds?"

"Must we not flatter her, since it is she who reigns and governs?"

"It is only too true that she has established

over Constantine's mind an empire which we all deplore. If I believed in magical operations, I would say she had given him to drink some philter prepared with diabolical aid. But it is not by exalting her pride by excessive praises, that we shall counteract her fatal influence."

"Another time, I will be more reserved; but it would spoil my discourse, were I to retrench anything from this passage on which I have bestowed particular care."

"Do me at least the favor of adding some few words in honor of Crispus. The Emperor will be the more pleased the better you speak of his son."

"I will arrange two or three fine sentences. I might compare him to the young Astyanax, the son of Hector, or Jonathan, the son of Saul —"

"Compare him to any one you wish, but do not forget him. You would displease all those who have fought under him."

When the deputies from the various provinces had arrived in Rome, the Emperor appointed a day on which to hear them. The orators, introduced by a chamberlain, entered the grand hall of the imperial palace, where an imposing spectacle met their eyes. Constantine, vested with the imperial purple, was seated on a throne; on his left was his son Crispus, and on the right the Empress Fausta, around whom were ranged her three young sons, Constantine, Constantius, and Constants.

"How sorry I am," thought Metrodorus, "that I never spoke of those three children. I might have

added a few words in honor of each. How flattered their mother would be! I may, perhaps, have time to repair my error, if I speak last."

On the right and left of the imperial family stood the court dignitaries, the officers of the treasury, the Pretorian prefect, the generals and military tribunes. Valerian was lost amid the crowd. Beside him stood Optatian, who, from time to time, whispered in his ear some sarcasm on the embarrassed delivery of the orators.

Metrodorus spoke last. He had not had time to compose flattering sentences for each of Fausta's sons, but he had arranged one to compliment the three. Among the orators who preceded him, some felicitated Constantine on his having granted religious liberty to the Christians; they displeased the Empress. Others expressed the hope that the protecting gods of Rome would not be abandoned, and that the liberty accorded the new religion would not impair the splendor of the ancient worship; these displeased the Emperor. Metrodorus spoke neither of Christianity nor paganism. He was there to compliment, and he did nothing else. Satisfaction was imprinted on every countenance, as his laudatory phrases, closely entwined like the flowers of a garland, fell on the ear; nor did Constantine frown when, with many periphrases, the orator told him he was more valiant than Alexander, more prudent than Hannibal, more politically skilful than Cæsar Augustus. As for the Empress, she was enraptured. Never had such intoxicating

praise been lavished on her. Her delight was increased by the compliment addressed to her children; but as Crispus was mentioned, she grew pale, and so visible was her discontent, that Metrodorus deeply regretted his having acted on Valerian's advice.

Constantine responded briefly, but in well-chosen terms, to the provincial deputies. He thanked them for the flattering words they had addressed to him, and reassured both pagans and Christians by guaranteeing to both the same liberty. He added that Christianity, after having been persecuted during three centuries, aspired not to become persecutor in its turn, and that he would punish severely whoever, under pretext of religion, should disturb the peace of the empire.

Before returning to his province each deputy received from the Emperor a present worthy of his munificence; but Metrodorus was better treated, inasmuch as he was appointed court-orator and assigned a large pension. Such an unlooked-for honor convinced him that he was the most eloquent man on earth: it should only have proved to him the power of flattery, for the Empress let him know that it was her influence that had determined Constantine to retain near them one who had so worthily praised them. When he learned to whom he was indebted for such a favor, he declared that his devotion to her interests should be unbounded.

Nor was Thalia less grateful. Thanks to her

father's position, she thought she might spend several years at Rome, and return to Egypt only when Arius should have compelled those who had excommunicated him to receive him with honor. To the Empress she owed the happiness of dwelling in the Eternal City near Valerian, whose official duties retained him there. But what were her obligations to the Bishop of Nicomedia, who had so opportunely advised her father not to forget the Empress in his panegyric? He, too, had claims on her gratitude, and his benefits were enhanced by the fact that in him Arius's partisans placed every hope.

Now that Metrodorus and his daughter had taken up their abode in Rome, with no intention of returning to Egypt, Valerian sighed after the moment that should unite him to Thalia in hymeneal bonds, and this desire he expressed with all the ardor of an inflamed heart. The rhetorician was too much flattered to refuse his daughter to a friend of the Emperor's son—a valiant soldier, for whom every one predicted a brilliant future. Thalia herself, although she would have wished her marriage deferred until Arius's triumph should be complete, could not listen coldly to Valerian's earnest entreaties for the consummation of his happiness. The approaching festival of Easter was appointed for the betrothal, which was to precede their marriage by some months.

Brighter days again shone on Valerian, and it seemed to him they would last forever, and that

nothing would disturb the serenity of his life. His greatest pleasure was to show to Thalia the magnificence of Rome, and, accompanied by her, to visit the famous monuments of the Eternal City. Alexandria was, indeed, the queen of Egypt, but how did she suffer in comparison with Rome, the queen of the world! Thalia, whose sense of the beautiful was most acute, was struck dumb with admiration before the palaces of the emperors, the baths of Caracalla, the gardens of Fronton and Pompey, the pantheon of Agrippa, the theatre of Germanicus, Nero's circus, the porticos of *Septa Julia*, raised by Augustus, the *Septizonium* of Severus. He also showed her the funereal monuments that bordered the Appian Way, the tombs of Scipio and Cecilia Metellus, Adrian's Mole,—which, later, became the castle of St. Angelo,—and led her to the amphitheatre of Vespasian, now called the Coliseum. A religious silence there reigned, where, twenty years previous, had resounded the brutal shouts of the populace and the plaudits of the more noble spectators. The arena was no longer empurpled by the impure blood of the gladiators or the sacred blood of the martyrs. The wild beasts no longer roared in their subterranean cages, nor did a savage populace applaud the gladiators whose swords laid the lions at their feet. No more were heard the hymns of the Christian martyrs under the teeth of the leopard, nor the farewell to life of the gladiators, saying to Cæsar, "We who are about to die salute you."

"You are aware," said Valerian, "that the innumerable Jews led into slavery after the destruction of Jerusalem were employed in the construction of this amphitheatre, in which so many martyrs have been slain. The Roman emperors thought that this colossal structure would attest their victory over the Jews and Christians, but, to the very consummation of ages, it shall remind men of but one thing—the triumph of Christianity. The palaces of the Cæsars shall be destroyed; the amphitheatre of Vespasian shall remain. Even to the end of time Christians will prostrate themselves with respect on this ground which has drunk the blood of the martyrs. Some day there will, doubtless, be a cross planted in the middle of the arena, and no one will cross the amphitheatre without kneeling for a moment at its foot."

Valerian also showed Thalia the cemeteries in which the Christians had interred their dead and celebrated the Holy Mysteries during the times of persecution, when those subterranean labyrinths were known only to the faithful, and studiously concealed from the pagans. Now that liberty was given to the Church, public honors were paid to the martyrs buried therein, and the faithful flocked to their tombs on the anniversaries of their deaths. A calendar had been arranged to indicate to the faithful to what cemetery they should carry each day the tribute of their piety, and whose glorious remains they should venerate. Commodious entrances and staircases rendered more easy

to the Christians of the fourth century the pilgrimage to the tombs of the martyrs interred in the Catacombs. Above the entrance of the greater number of the cemeteries a basilica was erected in honor of the most illustrious martyr whose relics reposed therein.

"These cemeteries," said Valerian, "are the completion of the lesson begun by Vespasian's amphitheatre. Who has vanquished the world, the persecutors or the martyrs? The doctrine of those who died for Jesus Christ is propagated to the ends of the earth, despite the edicts of Nero and Galerius. Those Christians who yielded up their lives in defence of their faith shall be eternally honored, while the names of their murderers shall be forever execrated. In a few years, the ashes of those earthly rulers who leagued together against God and his Christ shall be sought for in vain, while the relics of the martyrs, enshrined in gold and precious stones, shall be exposed to the veneration of the faithful."

These pious sentiments, which Valerian could not restrain, when he beheld in the last monuments of pagan Rome and the first monuments of Christian Rome a proof of the omnipotence and divinity of Jesus Christ, awoke in Thalia no responsive enthusiasm. At first he did not remark the difference in their sentiments, but gradually his walks with Thalia through Rome became less frequent. New acquaintances, of whom she spoke not to him, claimed her attention, and frequently she seemed

preoccupied and replied to him with evident distraction. She must have some secret which she either would not or could not confide to him. He remembered with what vivacity she had defended Arius, and painful suspicions entered into his mind in spite of his efforts to dismiss them.

One day, as Thalia was leaving her house, a stranger addressed her :

“Arius and the Bishop of Nicomedia present their regards to the learned daughter of the rhetorician Metrodorus.”

“How do you know me, and what message have you for me?” asked Thalia, in astonishment.

“Arius has in Rome a certain number of devoted adherents, but none more ardent than I, whom they recognize as their head.”

“Your name?”

“Artemon.”

“Were you in Egypt when Arius taught there the true Christian system?”

“I have never left Rome, where I continue the school founded by Theodotus of Byzantium, and Artemon. We are a considerable number. When we learned that Arius had developed in Egypt a doctrine conformable to ours, we entered into mutual relations with him and his protector, the Bishop of Nicomedia. Eusebius informed us that you were at Rome, and advised us to associate you in our efforts, saying that there was no other person who could be of such great help.”

“I shall be pleased, most assuredly, to continue here the work I began in Egypt.”

"The Empress will recompense you for whatever you may do for us."

"What! you are protected by my benefactress?"

"We serve her interests; she serves ours."

"I ask only the power of being useful to you."

"We are about to hold one of our meetings; will you assist at it?"

"Most willingly."

Artemon conducted Thalia to a spacious house built at the foot of Mount Cœlius, where they found about one hundred persons, the minority of whom were women, assembled in the *triclinium* or dining-room, transformed, for the time, into an assembly-room.

"Behold!" said Artemon, "the learned young woman to whom Arius has dedicated his famous poem, in which we have found, in regard to the Trinity, a doctrine so conformable to that of our masters."

Thalia was immediately welcomed with every token of admiration. She then related briefly the history of Arius, his struggle against the patriarch and his deacon Athanasius, and his condemnation by the Council of Alexandria.

"Since you have had the advantage of being instructed by Arius himself," said one of the assistants, "help me to convince this adorer of the Trinity who cannot comprehend my reasoning."

"I comprehend still less the system of Arius, who makes a creature the Creator of the world under the pretext that matter is the principle of evil."

"You cannot remain among us if, after having made profession of our doctrine, you go and consult the Catholics."

"I only wish to be enlightened."

"Listen, then, to my arguments. Either Christ is God or He is man. Now He is man since He was born of Mary, and is visible; hence He is not God. Who does not know that God is invisible?"

"Your reasoning is not logical. You make only two suppositions, while you should make three. You say: 'Either Christ is God or He is man.' You should add, or He is both God and man."

"If He is God He cannot be man, and if He is man He cannot be God."

"That is what I want proved. Show me clearly that it is impossible for the Divine nature to unite itself to the human nature."

"Cease your discussions," interrupted Artemon, "Here is Corvinus, grand chamberlain to the Empress."

Amid profound silence, Corvinus entered the hall. He was a man tall in stature, crafty in look, one whose countenance was the index of a base and perfidious soul.

"Let us begin our deliberations," said Artemon, "There are no false brethren present, and I wish to tell you the news written me by the Bishop of Nicomedia. If our doctrines make little progress in Rome, it is far different in the East,—Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor are won over to

the system of Arius, which, as you know, differs very little from ours. Hence, when we shall have the support of the head of the State, no one will dare to believe in three Divine persons. Her eternity, the Empress, asks only to protect us openly."

Here Corvinus bent his head in token of assent.

"When the most glorious and august Maximina Fausta shall be on the throne, Constantine will favor our efforts for the simplification of Christianity. But we have a formidable enemy in the person of his son Crispus, who, should he ever become emperor, will assuredly persecute those who will not, like him, recognize the Divinity of Christ. For the interest of the cause in which we are engaged, Crispus must not be suffered to reign. Now is the time to act. All will be lost should Constantine associate his son in the government of the empire."

"Let us try to rouse the people against him," cried a voice.

"Is it forbidden to strike with a poniard an enemy of the truth?" asked another.

"Better bribe one of his slaves to poison him," suggested a third.

Corvinus then spoke:

"I hope that in a short time we shall have nothing to fear from Crispus. Do not ask me how or by whom we shall be rid of the chief obstacle to our designs. Swear only that you are ready even to die for the Empress and her children."

"We swear! We swear!" cried all those present.

"Let no one forget his oath when the decisive moment arrives."

Artemon inquired if the doctrine which denied the Incarnation of the Word had made any progress in Rome since their last meeting, and each related his efforts to make proselytes.

"We should succeed more readily," said one, "if all those who deny the truth understood one another; but the Patripassians and Sabellians pretend that they could not call themselves Christians, did they not admit Christ's divinity."

"Let us address ourselves, by preference, to the Jews and pagans," replied Artemon. "As our system is more simple than that of the Catholics, they will accept it more readily."

"I am truly astonished that, notwithstanding the simplicity of our system, we make so few conversions among the Jews and pagans, while the Catholics win so many, although they require them to believe dogmas contrary to reason."

After a short deliberation on the means to be employed in combating more successfully the doctrine of three persons in one God, the assembly dispersed. Artemon accompanied Thalia home.

"Who are those Patripassians and Sabellians," asked she, "of whom you have been speaking?"

"Rome is the centre of all systems," replied Artemon. "All those who, during the last century, have tried to substitute for the theory of the Trinity of the Divine Persons, or the Economy in God, that of the absolute Unity, or the Monarchy,

have come to expose their doctrine in Rome. They are divided into two great schools. Some, to destroy radically the theory of the Trinity, regard only as man Jesus Christ, whom the Catholics adore as the Incarnate Word. This is the system of Theodotus of Byzantium, of my master Artemon, and of Arius. Others have devised another means of doing away with the theory of the Trinity. They admit that Jesus Christ is both God and man, but they add that He is none other than the Father who became incarnate and suffered for us. Hence they are called *Patripassians*, because they attribute to the Father the Incarnation and Redemption. This is the system of Praxeas, who came from Asia Minor to Rome, and of Noetus of Smyrna, whose disciples have introduced his doctrine here. There is this point of resemblance between our system and theirs: we both reject the Trinity, but with this difference — they regard Jesus Christ as God, we look on Him as mere man. Sabellius has completed the system of Praxeas and Noetus, who did not concern themselves about the Holy Ghost. The three Divine Persons are to him only three different and successive manifestations of the Divinity. 'The Monad in developing itself is become Triad.' Such is his principal maxim. 'God,' says he, 'is first developed in the world: then He is the Father. He manifested Himself in humanity: then He is the Son. Finally, He manifested Himself in the Church: then He is the Holy Ghost.'"

"The system is ingenious, but too subtle, too complicated."

"You are right; hold to what you have been taught by Arius."

After she returned home, Thalia could not, without anxiety, think of the assembly in which she had taken part. Those defenders of a doctrine like that of Arius had all the appearance of conspirators. Thalia had no love for Crispus, but she trembled at the thought that a fanatic was capable of stabbing or poisoning him. What had the Empress's chamberlain meant by saying that they should soon have nothing more to fear? She was anxious to know what fate hung over Crispus; but how was she to know the future? Why was she not more conversant with the magical arts employed in Egypt by Jamblicius and Porphyry? She dared not offer theurgical sacrifices. That would be idolatry. Besides, it was only after long-continued exercises that the good genii gave their responses. She remembered the saying of Jamblicius: "One divinity, whose name has been forgotten, or to whom one has failed to offer the stone, herb, or perfume that he likes, causes the failure of the sacrifice;" and she felt she was not sufficiently initiated into the mysteries of theurgy. But her slave, perhaps, knew how to evoke the inferior or evil genii and make them reveal the secrets of futurity. She interrogated Baucis.

"Did you never learn from some magician in Egypt the art of evocation?"

"No; I cannot make the demons speak, but I can compose philters of mandragora and valerian, and make talismans out of dried toads and the blood of a black dog."

"Could you tell me what will happen in a few days or months to a person whose life is menaced by some great danger?"

"My talent does not extend so far. I cannot even trace the magic square; but I can bring you to an Egyptian who knows all the arts and secrets of magic. She evokes the dead, causes spectres to appear, renders people invisible, and can transform men into wolves."

"Where does she live?"

"In a frightful hovel in the Suburra."

"How do you know her?"

"I went to her house with a slave who belonged to my former master."

"What did you want with her?"

"I wanted to know when I should be free."

"What did she tell you?"

"When a vessel sailing from Bithynia to Egypt shall see a Muse cast herself into the waves."

"That is not very clear. No matter, we will go to see your sorceress."

The house to which Baucis conducted Thalia was by far the darkest and most dilapidated of those which stood in the quarter of the Suburra. The witch, clothed in rags, with wrinkled features and scanty white hair, was more hideous in appearance than that Canidia whose witchcraft Horace has de-

scribed. Scattered around her hovel were fragments of dried bones, venomous plants, waxen figures, and plates of brass covered with mysterious signs.

"What do you want?" asked she of Thalia, with a glance and tone that made her shudder.

"I want to learn from you the fate reserved for a person in whom I am interested."

"The demons do not answer those who have not propitiated them by some offering."

Thalia threw a piece of money on a stone table, something like the family-altar of the Romans.

"Among those waxen figures is there any that recalls the features of the person about whom you inquire?"

"His image is on that piece of money."

"Ha! ha! the son of the Emperor who proscribes the worship of our gods! You wish, perhaps, to win the love of this Christian who hates the demons?"

"I shall never love him, and would despise his love; but I desire to know what fate awaits him."

The sorceress traced a circle around her, killed a black hen upon the altar, wrote on a fragment of papyrus the name of Crispus and several hieroglyphic characters. She kindled a fire of ivy-roots and cypress-branches, and burned the papyrus before a mirror of polished steel, like the moon's disc, naming, at the same time, the thirty-six genii, who, according to the Egyptians, presided over the zodiac. Then through her cave resounded a mourn-

ful groan, followed by a murmur like the confused noise of syllables pronounced in a low voice."

"Tryphon is powerful, and what he predicts will be accomplished," said the witch. "Have you not heard his oracle?"

"We did not catch all the words."

"The profane cannot understand the language of the demons of the air, the waters, and the infernal abysses. Hear what Tryphon predicts of the son of that hateful Emperor who protects the Christians: *The fatal stroke that shall end his life shall be given by a beloved hand.*"

"What does that mean?"

"Woe to me should I dare to interpret the words of the spirit who has responded to my incantations."

Thalia left the witch's hut more agitated than she had entered it. If the oracle were true, Crispus must perish! A plot was formed against him. But whose was the cherished hand that would strike? Among the young prince's friends, who was capable of playing the traitor? Assuredly not Valerian. Thalia was tempted to reveal all that she had heard in the assembly. But how could she divulge a secret which compromised so many persons, nay, even the Empress herself! In being present, had she not bound herself to silence? Besides, if Crispus's death would hasten the triumph of Arius, she ought not to do anything to prevent it. She resolved to await events; they were not slow in coming.

If Constantine reigned absolute master over the

world, Fausta was Empress of the heart of Constantine. But Crispus was a drawback on the fullness of her joy. His brilliant qualities, his recent victories, were sufficient causes for her hate, and she trembled lest the son of Minervina should be one day an associate in the empire, and, it might be, sole heir of the supreme power. What, then, would be the lot of the three children she had given to Constantine? They would, doubtless, be no better treated than the sons of the second wife of Constantius Chlorus, whom Helena's son had never raised to the throne. Fausta knew but of one means of securing the throne to her sons—the death of Crispus, and this she had sworn to compass. Corvinus was the accomplice of her hate and barbarity, and he had obtained from the witch, whom Thalia had visited, a poison that would dispatch him. But in this they failed; for as Crispus was about raising the cup containing the poison to his lips, it fell from his hand and was broken into fragments. He dared not himself become the prince's assassin, and he feared to employ the aid of another, lest he should be betrayed. But the sorceress gave him an advice truly diabolical.

“Constantine,” said she, “is so deeply enamored of the Empress that he would be capable of anything in a fit of jealousy. Let her persuade him that Crispus is inflamed with criminal desires, and has dared to declare them to her.”

The blood of Maximian Hercules flowed not in vain in Fausta's veins, and she was fully capable

of playing so detestable a part, in order to arouse Constantine's hatred against his son.

"I implore you, for the sake of my honor and yours," said she to the Emperor, "to prevent Crispus from seeing me."

"It seems to me, however, that you need not fear his hatred."

"I fear nothing from his hatred, but I fear everything from his love."

"What do I hear? What do you say?"

"Do not force me to explain myself more fully, but understand that I wish neither to see nor hear him."

Constantine, out of himself with rage, ran through all the halls of the imperial palace vainly seeking his son; when he returned to the Empress's apartment he found him there. Ignorant of the horrible intrigue of which he was to be the victim, the prince, who, in his noble candor, could not bear to be hated by his stepmother, had come to implore her to pardon his involuntary wrongs, and treat him like one of her own children.

"What have I done that you detest me?" he asked.

"You look on me as a stranger."

"Do not believe it. I love you as if you were my mother, and I would be only too happy if you would deign to accept my love."

"No, I cannot love you, I will never love you," cried Fausta, hearing a step which she well knew.

Constantine heard the last words of his son and the Empress. Tearing away the curtain which

enclosed the apartment, he beheld Crispus kneeling at Fausta's feet, and with sword in hand he rushed upon him :

"Wretch ! You wish to seduce your father's wife ?"

"You know your son better."

He could explain himself no further, for, blinded by rage and jealousy, Constantine plunged the sword into his son's heart; he fell bathed in blood, and expired murmuring: "My father. . . I am innocent."

The Emperor, suddenly appeased, gazed in mute horror on his son's corpse, while Fausta, casting herself into his arms, shed tears of joy, which she feigned were the outpouring of grief. A few moments later, she was rejoicing with Corvinus over the success of their base treachery. Rome was horror-stricken when the news of Crispus's death became noised abroad. The courtiers gave out that a sudden illness had carried off the young prince; but, ere the close of the day, every one knew he had fallen by his father's hand. The Christians concealed neither their distress nor their apprehensions, and feared that a new persecution would be commanded by Constantine to please Fausta, his evil genius.

Pope Sylvester boldly crossed the threshold of the imperial palace, and reproached Constantine for having shed innocent blood; but the Emperor did not listen to him with as much repentance and humility as David, after the murder of Uriah, listened to the Prophet Nathan.

"These Christians abuse the liberty you have granted them," said Fausta. "The priest of Jupiter would not have spoken with so much audacity. The Bishop of Rome thinks he has a right to judge the actions of emperors as well as those of their subjects. It is said that Rome belongs to him, and that the Cæsars have only to seek elsewhere another imperial city."

Constantine, urged on by his wife, ordered Valerian to seize Pope Sylvester, and throw him into the Mamertine Prison. Valerian warned the Pope, and Sylvester, leaving Rome, retired to Mount Soracte. Several Christians who had loudly expressed the fears with which the late murder had inspired them, were seized and thrown into prison. Artemon and his disciples ran through the city crying: "Long live Constantine! Long live Fausta!" but their voices woke no responsive echo.

The friends of Crispus, the unfortunate victim of the hated Fausta, seeing that the government of Constantine was becoming tyrannical, were careful in public to dissimulate their indignation; but they poured out the bitterness of their hearts to the consul Ablavius. Overwhelmed by Constantine's barbarous act, the consul suspected the intrigue which had led to the murder, and he left no means untried for its discovery and punishment.

"I have to-day composed a short epigram on the reign of Constantine, who so greatly fails in what he promised," said Optatian one evening, when the group of friends was assembled at the house of Ablavius.

"What form have you given to the verses of your epigram?" asked Valerian. "That of a ship, and altar, or a Greek letter?"

"It is a very simple distich. Here it is:

Let none regret the golden age Saturnian;
The ruby age is ours, but 't is the ruby Neronian."

"This very night," said Ablavius, "that epigram shall be affixed to the door of Constantine's palace."

"By whom?"

"By myself."

"What imprudence!"

"I will arouse the Emperor's slumbering conscience, or will follow Crispus to the grave."

The next day Constantine read on his palace door the verses comparing his reign to Nero's. He trembled with rage, and felt the sharp sting of remorse. In vain did he try to find who had dared to carry so near the throne the expression of the people's grief and horror. Nevertheless, it was easy to know that Optatian was their author; for, carried away by his vanity, he himself revealed the fact.

Constantine, wishing to punish rather like Augustus than Nero, banished him to Bithynia.

The departure of Lactantius speedily followed that of Optatian, for the master of Crispus, who had rested so many fair hopes on his pupil, could not resign himself to live near the father who had slain him, and he retired to spend in solitude his disconsolate old age.

Valerian would willingly have followed his example, so great was his grief at the loss of his

friends. Thalia, touched by his despondency, felt the ardor of her first love revive. She told him of her visit to the sorceress of the Suburra, and how startled she had been by the exact fulfilment of the oracle obtained by her incantations. Valerian, believing not her power to read the future, asked himself if the Egyptian, in answering Thalia's question, had not had some knowledge of the affair. He revealed his suspicions to the consul Ablavius, who went to the Suburra to draw from the witch her secret. Threats and menaces were unavailing, but the power of gold could not be resisted. Clutching with eager hand the offered sesterces, she revealed the plot that had brought about the prince's death. Hastening to the imperial palace, the consul forced his way to Constantine's presence.

"My Lord, they have deceived you," he cried; "they have played on your affection to cause the death of an innocent man."

"Speak not of Crispus, or dread my anger."

"Kill me, if you will, but hear me. I would die willingly, could I but make you know the truth."

"Speak, then, but guard your words."

"To assure to her sons the supreme power, the ambitious Fausta was not afraid to accuse of a crime of which he was incapable, your unfortunate Crispus, whom she feared you would associate with yourself in the Empire."

"Have you proofs of what you advance?"

"Interrogate her accomplices, Corvinus and the sorceress Afra."

"I will myself make the inquiry. Woe to whoever shall have deceived me!"

They sought for the witch, but she had fled no one knew whither. Corvinus, on being threatened with the torture, revealed everything so clearly that doubt was no longer possible. The Emperor, convinced of his son's innocence and his wife's perfidy, filled the imperial palace with the heart-rending cry:

"Crispus! Crispus! ah, who will restore Crispus?"

The Empress hastened to him.

"Tigress!" he cried; "what have you done to my son?"

She threw herself at his feet, but he repulsed her, and, calling for his son's most devoted servants, said:

"Avenge your master! Fill the bath with boiling water, and stifle in it this Medea, this monster under the appearance of a woman."

Fausta, bathed in tears, rent the air with her shrieks; she implored pardon, named her three sons, accused Corvinus; but all in vain. The servants dragged the Empress into the bathing apartments; she implored mercy, offered gold, and clung convulsively to the arms that held her. The servants lifted her up, cast her into the bath, and held her under the water with iron hooks until her sentence was executed.

Thus it was that Constantine, expiating one cruelty by another, was delivered from his evil genius. On the same day Corvinus was quartered.



CHAPTER IX.

THE LATERAN PALACE.

ON learning the tragical fate of the Empress, Valerian could see in her terrible chastisement only a proof of the repentance of Constantine in despair for having slain his son, and he felt a return of hope that, by the glory of his reign, he would yet efface the bloody stains that had sullied its commencement. Thalia, on the contrary, was overwhelmed with grief, and bitterly reproached herself for the revelation she had made to Valerian. For had she not, by making known the witch's prediction, furnished, though unwittingly, Fausta's enemies with the clue to her treachery? What would be the consequences of that unexpected death to the partisans of Arius? Would not Constantine's vengeance be, perhaps, extended to those who had received benefits from the Empress? Would not Metrodorus be obliged to leave Rome? Would he pardon the praises which he had lavished on Fausta, foreseeing neither her fatal intrigues nor her lamentable end?

While Thalia thus abandoned herself to sorrowful thoughts, a rumor was circulated throughout Rome, which caused the bloody scenes that

had lately been enacted in the palace to be wholly forgotten. Valerian, in consternation, went to see Metrodorus.

"You seem overwhelmed with violent grief," said the rhetorician.

"Why should I not be? The Emperor is ill."

"Dangerously?"

"Mortally."

"He is expiating Fausta's death!" cried Thalia.

"Say, rather, that of Crispus."

"Do they know his disease?"

"He is attacked, it is said, with elephantiasis. It is a sort of hideous leprosy, which covers his entire body with white pustules, and causes most cruel suffering."

"What ambitions would spring up on all sides were Constantine to die!"

"Heaven preserve us from such a misfortune! Fausta's sons are too young to succeed their father. The purple would be usurped by the boldest or the most crafty, the East would separate itself from the West, civil war would desolate the provinces, the barbarians would invade our frontiers, and we should behold the ruin of the Roman empire."

"We should not have had so many dangers to dread, if Constantine, instead of repudiating Diocletian's system of government, had named an Augustus and two Cæsars after the defeat of Licinius. It is not well that the destinies of the world should rest on one head."

"If we had four heads, they would be jealous of

one another, and civil war would never end. What we should desire is the reëstablishment of the rights of the Senate and Roman people."

"The soldiers, probably, would proclaim the new emperor," said Thalia, "were Constantine to die. I hope that those who fought in the campaign against the Franks will not forget Crispus's friend."

"They would first think of those more worthy than I," replied Valerian, smiling, "Besides, were I to accept the throne, it would only be to establish thereon the sons of Constantine."

The Emperor's malady was prolonged, and all hope of cure was given up. The higher dignitaries of the empire asked themselves anxiously who was to be their next master. Each wished to be the first to salute the rising sun; each strove to know from what point he should spring forth. The pagans thought of offering the purple to that general most attached to their worship, on condition of his revoking the edict of public liberty published by Constantine. The Christians offered to God continual prayers for the restoration of the prince who had first broken the bloody sword of persecution. The pious Helena, who now alone received the title of empress, incessantly offered at the altar her prayers and tears for her son's recovery.

Suffering irritated Constantine, but did not bring him back to Christian sentiments. He endeavored to conceal from his subjects the gravity of his

malady, and bade his courtiers reply to inquirers about his health, that he was fully recovered and would soon appear in public. But he left not the imperial palace; he wished to see no one; nay, he had even a horror of himself. His attendants dared not approach him, lest they themselves should become infected. All Rome knew of his horrible malady, and in the provinces it was said that he had, like Nabuchodonozor, been changed into a beast.

He had forgotten the God who, before the battle of Pont Milvius, had shown him in the heavens the sign of victory; perhaps he thought himself no longer worthy of His favors since the deaths of Crispus and Fausta. If the God of the Christians had not withdrawn His protection, should he be covered with that hideous leprosy? He did not persecute openly those to whom he had granted liberty of worship; but his affection for them had become changed into resentment, and he still caused Pope Sylvester to be sought after, that he might load him with chains.

All remedies employed to combat the disease were powerless, and nothing remained but to implore heavenly succor. Being unwilling to address the God of the Christians, the Emperor had recourse to pagan divinities. He dismissed the physicians he had called from Marsica, and consulted the most famous diviners of Egypt and Greece. But their lustral waters, over which they had traced magical signs while invoking their gods,

were not more efficacious than the waters of the Tiber. In vain did Constantine bathe himself therein; instead of alleviating his pains, it seemed to increase them. He wrote to Tiridatus, King of Armenia, and begged him to send the most skillful magicians of Persia and India to employ in his favor the resources of their art. They came, bringing their talismans, their meteoric stones, their enchanted cups,—everything which might aid their magical operations. They advised Constantine to wrap himself in the skin of a sea-calf, and to remain for three hours in a bath of wild-goat's milk, into which they poured the juice of sacred plants, gathered on the night of the new moon. But the magicians of Persia and India were as unsuccessful as others had been, and Constantine came forth from the bath worse than when he had entered it.

The priests of Jupiter Capitolinus having complained that he neglected the ancient deities of Rome to invoke strange gods, Constantine sent for them.

“Do you believe Jupiter to be all-powerful?” he asked.

“Has not he caused the power of Rome to be extended from one end of the world to the other?” they replied.

“Can he free me from the leprosy?”

“No doubt of it.”

“Well, then, cure me, or I will cause you to be put to death.”

This threat affrighted the priests, for they had

not such absolute confidence in the power of their god.

"There is," said they to one another, "but one way of escaping death. Let us order some impracticable remedy. As the Emperor will not be able to procure it, we shall save our lives; for, if he continue ill, we can always affirm that, had he employed the remedy indicated, he would have been cured."

The priests then told the Emperor that he should infallibly be cured were he to bathe in the warm blood of infants yet at the breast. They assured him that this blood, being as yet scarcely formed, had the power of drawing out corruption. Constantine shuddered at the thought of such a remedy, and it seemed to him that the phantom of Crispus stood before him, saying: "Hast thou not shed enough of innocent blood?"

But, rendered insensible by the continuance of his malady and the sharpness of his sufferings, he resolved to try this final remedy. One night Rome heard groans, sobs, and despairing cries like those that resounded through the valleys of Bethlehem during the slaughter of the innocents under Herod. When the soldiers had pitilessly carried off the infants, whose blood was to form the Emperor's bath, their distracted mothers filled the courts of the imperial palace with their despairing shrieks. Constantine, on hearing the wailing of the children and the groans of their mothers, was filled with horror at the thought of the barbarous deed he

was about to commit: he caused the babes to be restored to their mothers, saying he would rather die than bathe in their blood.

During the night he had a vision, in which he saw two old men, one holding in his hand a sword, the other keys.

"Why dost thou persist," asked they, "in seeking thy cure from false gods? Demoniical conjurations can never free thee from the leprosy. By the cross of our Saviour thou hast vanquished thy enemies; by it alone canst thou conquer the demons and thyself. The true lustral water, which has power to cleanse thy soul and body, is the water of baptism. Send for Pope Sylvester, whom thou hast persecuted, and who lies concealed in a grotto of Mount Soracte. Beg him to plunge thee into the sacred font of Baptism, and thou shalt come forth from the regenerating waters delivered from all evil."

So saying, they disappeared. Then, in a distant and resplendent place, Constantine beheld the Saviour blessing the world, and near him stood Crispus, crowned with a diadem more brilliant than that of the Cæsars. Approaching his father, he said: "Christ is the salvation and hope of the republic."

Constantine awoke somewhat consoled; his sufferings were less acute and his remorse less bitter. Repentance, entering into his soul, dissipated the intoxication of supreme power, and he resolved to submit himself completely to the law of the all-

powerful Christ, who had freed him from all danger so long as he had been faithful to His precepts. Assembling around him the most illustrious representatives of the army, the Senate, and the magistracy—some of whom were Christians, others still sunk in the darkness of paganism—he told them he had resolved to embrace the Christian religion, and asked for their opinion.

“Lord,” cried the philosopher Maximus, “if you declare yourself Christian, the whole empire will follow your example.”

“What more blessed thing could happen?” asked Valerian.

“You are about to open a door to all kinds of novelties. If you change your religion to-day, your successors, in a century or two, authorized by your example, will change theirs again. The well-being of the State calls for an established, immutable rule in religious matters.”

“If the Romans had been faithful to this principle, they would not have admitted into their temples all the divinities of the nations they have conquered.”

“The change which is at this time being operated in the religious belief of the world is not the work of man,” said Constantine; “it is the effect of Divine power. The Christian worship could not have survived the persecutions to which, for three centuries, it has been subjected, had it not been sustained by superhuman power.”

“There is but one doctrine revealed by God Him-

self and preserved by an infallible Church," added Valerian, "which can assure to mankind the two-fold benefit of unity and perpetuity of religious belief."

"What! you would allow the priests of the Christians to judge, with supreme authority, religious questions?"

"Why should we not recognize this power in them, since God Himself has established them to fulfil that august mission?"

"What proof have we that they hold from God the power they arrogate to themselves?"

"Christ is the founder of the Catholic Church; now Christ is God."

"For the Christians."

"For all creatures, both angels and men," exclaimed Constantine.

"By what signs, my Lord, do you recognize His divinity?"

"He has delivered the world from the yoke of idolatry, men from the slavery of the passions, Rome from the power of Maxentius, and me he will deliver from the hideous leprosy which the priests of the false gods have not been able to cure."

"When I behold this miracle I will confess His power."

In the grotto of Mount Soracte, whither he had retired while awaiting the return of brighter days to Rome, Pope Sylvester, surrounded by three priests and two deacons, was addressing heaven

in fervent prayer for the peace of the Church and the conversion of Constantine. Suddenly he beheld the asylum which he had thought a secure shelter, surrounded by soldiers. Could the faithful, so devoted to their Pontiff, have betrayed the secret of his retreat? Already the rocks were scaled, and the soldiers were on the point of discovering the cavern from which the Sovereign Pontiff governed the Church of God. Seeing the terror of the priests and deacons, the Pope said:

“Behold the time of grace, behold the day of salvation! Let us remember the glorious end of our predecessors who have shed their blood for Jesus Christ, and let us thank God for having granted us, in our turn, the grace of gathering the palm of martyrdom.”

Suddenly the priest Vitus uttered a cry of joy:

“I recognize the chief of the soldiers! It is Valerian, who has already proved his devotedness.”

“He doubtless comes to warn us that our retreat has been discovered, and to urge us to fly to some more secret shelter.”

“Let us return to Rome, and let the false Emperor do what he likes with us.”

When Valerian perceived the Pontiff at the opening of the grotto, he ran to him, and humbly bowing before him, cried:

“Holy Father, rejoice!”

He then related the Emperor's vision, the conference he had held with the magnates of the court, and the resolution he had taken to fully embrace Christianity.

"Constantine awaits you in his palace," added he, "to express to you his deep repentance for his faults, and his desire to be purified in the regenerating waters of Baptism."

The Pontiff raised his hands to heaven, and his eyes were suffused with joyful tears.

"O God, omnipotent, we praise Thee! O Lord, we bless Thee! O Eternal Father, may the whole earth adore Thee! In Thee have I placed my trust. I shall never be confounded!"

The Pope, accompanied by Valerian and the priest Vitus, went to the imperial palace and entered the hall where Constantine awaited them, concealing beneath his imperial purple the ravages of the leprosy.

"May peace and victory, the daughters of heaven, always accompany your majesty!" said the Pontiff to the Emperor.

"I have of late afflicted the Christians of Rome," said Constantine. "I gave orders to my soldiers to cast you into prison. I have compelled you to seek an asylum in the mountains. Will you forgive me?"

"May the Lord forgive me all my offences as I forgive those who have offended me!"

"I have in a dream beheld two old men like two august divinities, who reproached me for the impious credulity with which I have consulted the magians, diviners, and idolatrous priests. They promised me I should be healed of my dreadful malady when the Supreme Pontiff of the Christians

should have plunged me into the sacred waters of Baptism. One of the old men carried in his hand two keys; the other a glittering sword. Can you tell me who those two gods were?"

"They were not gods. They were the princes of the apostles, Peter and Paul, chosen by God to establish His Church. Peter holds in his hand the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and Paul the sword of the evangelical word."

"Have you the portraits of those two apostles?"

"Their precious images have been left us by Luke, the disciple of Paul. They are not works of art, but they are more precious to us than the most celebrated paintings of Apelles."

"Show me those images. I will see if they bear any resemblance to the majestic personages I saw in my dream."

The priest Vitus went in search of the pictures of the holy apostles, preserved in the house which, in the time of St. Peter, belonged to the Senator Cornelius Pudens. It was situated in the *Vicus patricius*. There it was that the successors of St. Peter resided near the most ancient pontifical church of Rome, that which bore the name of Saint Pudentiana, one of the two daughters of the Senator Pudens.

When Constantine beheld the portraits, he could not restrain his emotion.

"I recognize," he cried, "the two venerable men who appeared to me. It is done; my resolution is taken; I will defer its accomplishment no longer. Prepare everything for my baptism."

"The Lord will recompense your piety if you prepare yourself worthily to be born anew in the baptismal font."

"What must I do to be worthy to receive the sacrament of regeneration?"

"You must prepare yourself by seven days of penance, during which you must implore pardon for the offences you have committed, and offer to God your fasts, prayers, watchings, and tears."

"May the God whom I have offended, take pity on my suffering and my repentance!"

The frightful malady of the Emperor did not permit him to accomplish in public the holy ceremonies of Baptism. They prepared for this solemn act one of the vestibules of the palace, since known as the piscina of Constantine, *lavacrum Constantinianum*. When the first Christian emperor, in his gratitude, gave, by a solemn edict, to Pope Sylvester and his successors the Lateran Palace, "the first and the most august of the imperial palaces;" when he erected the Constantinian Basilica, since known under the name of Saint John Lateran, he gave to that basilica the sacred font in which he had been baptized by the Sovereign Pontiff. The baptistery of Saint John Lateran was worthy, by its magnificence, of forever recalling the memory of Constantine's baptism. It was a vast basin of porphyry, decorated exteriorly with plates of metal richly enchased. The interior was covered with plates of silver. Two porphyry columns rose in the middle of the piscina and supported a golden

lamp, in which were burned, at the paschal solemnity, two hundred pounds of balsam oil. A massive lamb of gold discharged the baptismal water into the basin. On the right, a silver statue represented the Saviour of the world; on the left, another of the same metal, represented St. John the Baptist bearing in his hand a banner, with the inscription: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." Opposite this stood an altar of perfumes, of massive gold, enriched with emeralds and amethysts. Around the basin were silver stags, representing the souls who sighed after Baptism, as the stag sighs for the fountain of water.

On the day appointed for the Baptism, the priests imposed hands on the Emperor and led him to the baptistery, where the Sovereign Pontiff awaited him. There he had to answer the questions always proposed to the catechumens before they were plunged into the holy waters.

"Dost thou renounce Satan?"

"I do renounce him."

"And all his pomps?"

"I do renounce them."

"And all his works, that is to say, all the vain idols fabricated by the hand of man?"

"I do renounce them."

Constantine then made his profession of faith, declaring solemnly that he believed in one only God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ His only son, our Lord,

who was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary.

The Empress Helena shed tears of joy on hearing her son profess, with so much piety, his faith in Jesus Christ, and the most intimate friends of Constantine, and the highest dignitaries of the court, admitted to the honor of being present at that touching ceremony, shared in the happiness of the Empress. Valerian was moved to the very depths of his soul, and he deeply regretted that Thalia had not witnessed so consoling a spectacle.

The Sovereign Pontiff, having blessed the water, plunged the august catechumen therein three times, pronouncing over him the sacramental words. When the Emperor, after the third immersion, arose and came forth from the baptismal font, the hideous leprosy which had covered his body, had entirely disappeared. The witnesses of the miracle cried out:

"Let us glorify the Lord! His name is holy, and His omnipotence operates the greatest prodigies!"

The Emperor being clothed in the white robe of the neophytes, the Sovereign Pontiff anointed him with holy Chrism, and conferred on him the seven-fold gifts of the Holy Spirit. He traced on his forehead the sign of the cross, saying: "May God seal thee with the seal of His faith in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." All the clergy responded, Amen. "Peace be with thee," said the Pontiff; and the clergy responded, Amen.

Being thus reconciled with God, and miraculously healed of the leprosy, Constantine gave the Pope the most expressive testimonies of his gratitude. On the present occasion, he would himself, in presence of the people, hold the bridle of the horse which the Pontiff mounted. The palace of Lateran he gave to be in future the residence of the successors of St. Peter, and near the palace he erected a church which was called Constantine's Basilica. While the foundations of this temple were being dug, he carried on his royal shoulders, in honor of the twelve apostles, twelve baskets of earth.

The magnificence of the Lateran Basilica was an additional proof of the triumph of the Church, for in it, for the first time, the riches of earth were publicly consecrated to Jesus Christ. On the façade were silver statues representing the Saviour seated in the midst of the twelve apostles, who stood around Him. In the apsis, our Lord was represented on a golden throne surrounded by four silver angels, each bearing a cross in his hand. Below the façade was hung a lamp of pure gold formed of fifty dolphins, whose open mouths emitted the light. The vault of the basilica was ornamented for its entire length and breadth by imbricated plates of gold. It had seven altars of beaten silver. A lamp of pure gold was suspended before the high altar, in which most precious oil of spikenard was continually burned, the perfumed flame of which added its brilliancy to the light of the wax tapers.

which burned in fifty silver candelabra. In the interior of the basilica, in the right nave, were forty silver lamps, and in the left twenty-five. Seeing so much wealth consecrated to the Saviour God, whose adorers had, for so long, been obliged to conceal themselves, the pagans were forced to exclaim: "Christ has conquered! Christ reigns! Christ commands!"

Constantine did not wait until the completion of the basilica to excite his subjects to follow his example. He convoked an assembly of the Roman people in the Ulpian palace in Trajan's Forum. Having taken the magistrate's chair, he extended his hand to enforce silence, and said:

"Let all the people, let all the nations of the earth rejoice with us; let them unite their voices with ours to render to our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, universal thanksgiving. The great God who dwells in heaven, and fills all earth with His immensity, has deigned to visit us in the persons of His holy apostles, and restore to us health of body at the same time that He enlightened our soul by the sacrament of Baptism. Let those who still languish in the darkness of ignorance at last open the eyes of their soul. It is time to acknowledge that the idols so long adored as gods, are worthy of neither that august name nor the worship rendered them. Let all renounce such superstition, the daughter of error. Let the one only God who reigns in heaven be alone adored. As for me, by the grace of Christ our God, I have

already abjured idolatry. Now hear my will. For the future, the pontiffs of the Christian law shall enjoy all the privileges granted to the idolatrous priests. We grant to the pious clergy and ministers consecrated to the service of the Roman Church, each in his different order, the privileges of honor, preëminence, and authority enjoyed by our senate; and we wish them to be respected like the patricians, consuls, and other imperial dignitaries. I adjure all emperors who may attain to power, all the nobility, the heads of the army, the senate, and the whole people to respect our will."

On hearing these words the pagans in the assembly bent their heads in confusion. The Christians were the more numerous: they applauded the Emperor, who thus published to the whole world his Baptism and faith in Jesus Christ.

"Long life to Constantine!"

"The God of the Christians is the only true God!"

"Woe to those who do not adore Christ!"

These cries of a people excited by the triumph of their faith, terrified the pagans, but the boldest among them opposed their acclamations to those of the Christians.

"Jupiter is the protector of the Roman people!"

"We will not leave unhonored the altar of Vesta and the sacred fire guarded by her virgins!"

But the Christians cried more earnestly:

"It is Christ who has rendered the Emperor victorious!"

"Those who do not adore Christ are the enemies of the empire!"

"The servants of Christ are invincible!"

Other voices added:

"Let the idolatrous priests be banished from Rome!"

"Let the temples of the false gods be closed!"

"Let the Christian churches alone be open!"

It was not Constantine's intention to take severe measures against the pagans, for he wished all his subjects, whatever their religion, to dwell in peace. He again extended his hand, and, when silence was reëstablished, continued:

"The Christians, accustomed to render good for evil, will not persecute those who, for so long a time, persecuted them, nor will they employ any other means than those of persuasion to free them from the yoke of idolatry. It is not by threats or by fear of human power that men can be drawn to the worship of God, but by conviction and serious reflection. To impose the Christian faith on those unwilling to receive it, would be a crime. Such is our rule of justice. Let those, then, who are not yet resolved on becoming Christians, fear neither injury nor punishment. We most certainly desire they would imitate our way, but we will never compel them to do so. It is enough for me to declare solemnly that all those who spontaneously embrace the Christian religion will rejoice my heart, and have a claim on my friendship."

The pagans, reassured by these words, raised their heads; the Christians praised the Emperor's wisdom, and the assembly separated peaceably with the cry, a thousand times repeated: "Long life to Constantine!"

An innumerable *cortège* accompanied the Emperor even to his palace, repeating their joyous acclamations. Never had the popular joy been so lively or so pure. During the night the streets of Rome blazed with a thousand fires; the public buildings were surrounded by a crown of tapers and lamps. Idolatry was vanquished: Christianity was seated on the throne of the Cæsars.

Valerian joyfully related to Metrodorus and his daughter the details of the Emperor's baptism, and of the assembly held in the Ulpian palace. Thalia was far from experiencing the same happiness; for she doubted if Constantine, after making so solemn a profession of Christianity, would be favorable to the Arian party and their doctrine. She wrote to Arius, informing him of all she had heard, but the Bishop of Nicomedia had already been apprised of the late events at Rome. Arius's answer reassured Thalia.

"Since the death of Fausta," wrote the heresiarch, "the woman who has most influence over the Emperor's mind is his sister Constantia, and this princess is entirely devoted to us. Constantine desires, above all things, that his subjects live in peace: he will not permit us to be anathematized for a quarrel about words. Eusebius has already caused him to be informed that our doctrine in no

way differs from that of the patriarch of Alexandria, save in a purely speculative question which has nothing to do with faith, and he has hopes that the Emperor will order the Catholics to permit us freely to expound our opinions. Eusebius flatters himself that he shall be able to gain Constantine, and even to rebaptize him in causing him to recite our creed, which does not admit the Word to be equal to God, eternal and omnipotent.

“Continue to serve the truth in Rome with your accustomed zeal. Aid us to purify Christianity from all the false ideas that have tainted its primitive simplicity: lead our friends to see that there can be but one only Creator, and that the Word is a creature. Be of good heart. ARIUS.”

The Paschal festivals were celebrated at Rome with the most fervent enthusiasm. The Christians associated with the triumph of Jesus Christ rising from the tomb, that of the Church coming forth victorious from the Catacombs.

The day appointed for the betrothal of Valerian and Thalia being come, Valerian prepared himself by earnest prayer for the solemn engagement he was about to take before God. Metrodorus, persuaded that his daughter's happiness would be assured by her union with Valerian, congratulated her on the advantageous alliance she was about to contract.

Thalia, on her part, seemed happy that the decisive moment was at length approaching, and so affectionate were her words, so tender the looks she fixed on Valerian, that one would say her attachment was stronger than ever. At times, how-

ever, she would bend her head as if overwhelmed by some deep sadness, but again she would draw herself up haughtily, and with the air of one who had taken a determined resolution.

At that epoch, the betrothal or promise of marriage (*sponsalia*) was simply a family ceremony, and those engagements which precede marriage were not, as at a later day, contracted in a church in presence of the pastor or his delegate. Valerian inquired of the priest Vitus what were the customs observed by the Roman Church in the ceremonies that preceded and accompanied the marriage of the faithful.

"The usages of the Roman Church, which have descended to us from our forefathers, are these," replied Vitus. "A short time after their betrothal, the future spouses are conducted to the church to contract the nuptial alliance. They make their profession of faith before the bishop. The future husband holds the arm of his spouse above the wrist. The bishop blesses them, and begs God the graces they need to mutually sanctify themselves in the new life they intend to enter upon. A crown is placed on their heads to show that Christians are a royal race, destined to wear eternally in heaven a diadem of glory. On account of our horror of the pagan superstitions connected with the *flammeum*, we have not yet adopted the use of the veil for the nuptial ceremony; but when idolatry shall have disappeared it may be adopted without danger."

"How do you regard the betrothal?"

"As promises exchanged between the future spouses, by which they mutually engage themselves to contract ere long the tie of marriage. The betrothal should be celebrated only with the consent of the contracting parties and their guardians. The man gives the woman an earnest of the alliance they intend to contract by placing on her finger a ring, the symbol of fidelity; then he gives her, in presence of the witnesses invited by both families, the promised dowry, as also the written agreement containing the conditions of the contract."

Valerian begged Vitus to be present at his betrothal; Thalia invited no witness save Artemon. She arrayed herself for this family festival in her richest attire. A cincture adorned with the purest pearls confined the graceful folds of her silken tunic edged with purple; clasps of gold were entwined within her hair, while her rare beauty was enhanced by the color with which emotion tinged her cheek. Valerian tried, in vain, to calm the excited throbbings of his heart, his trembling voice, his bashful glance, the continual smile that played about his lips, with charming grace, revealed the joy that inebriated his heart. He handed to Metrodorus the contract which stipulated Thalia's dowry.

"The woman happy enough to gain such a spouse as you, my dear Valerian, needs no other wealth," said the rhetorician.

He then presented to the young maiden, as a

token of fidelity, the gold ring she was to wear even to the end of life.

"Receive," said he, "this pledge, by which I bind myself to you forever, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our God."

"You mean to say the Son of our God and His most perfect creature," interrupted Artemon.

"As man, Jesus Christ is the most perfect work of God. As God, He is equal to the Father in all things," said Vitus.

"The Father has no equal. He it was who created the Son," replied Artemon.

"I am a Christian, and Thalia is a Christian," exclaimed Valerian. "We both believe that, 'In the beginning was the Word; that the Word was in God; that all things have been made by Him.'"

"Does Thalia believe that the Word is not a creature?" asked Artemon.

A terrible struggle was going on in Thalia's soul. A cold sweat bedewed her face, suddenly become as white as marble. She felt that Valerian's eyes were fixed upon her, while Artemon awaited her answer. A lie, under such circumstances, would be as useless as shameful. The moment had at length arrived in which Valerian must know the whole truth. Leaning on her father's arm, that she might not fall, she withdrew the hand she had extended to receive the betrothal ring, and, in a stifled voice, murmured,—

"I believe that the Word is a creature whom God drew forth from nonentity, and whom He charged with the creation of the world."

"The wretched woman! She has blasphemed," murmured Vitus.

"Arius has drawn her away!" sighed Valerian, sorrowfully burying his head in his hands.

"Let us not disturb the joy of this occasion by a dispute about words," said Metrodorus. "Let each of you hold your own opinion."

"There is here no question of an opinion," replied Vitus, "but of a fundamental dogma of Christianity. If Jesus Christ is not God, the Church He has founded is but a human institution, the apostles have deceived the world, and the Saviour himself has erred against truth by declaring that He is God."

"If the Word is God, like His Father, there are then two Gods. Now this is absurd," said Artemon."

"You know well what the Church teaches, and for what belief the martyrs died. There is one only God, in three distinct Persons. The Father from all eternity begot His Word, His Wisdom, His Son, distinct from Him as a Divine Person, but having but one and the same substance with Him. From the Father and the Son the Holy Ghost eternally proceeds."

"The Arian system simplifies that incomprehensible mystery and dissipates its obscurity."

"The Arian system is a human invention. The belief of the Church is a doctrine revealed by God."

"Arius admits the revealed doctrine, but gives it a reasonable explanation."

"Arius has been excommunicated by the Synod of Alexandria."

"But has been justified by the synod held in Bithynia, under the Bishop of Nicomedia."

"Cease these discussions," said Thalia. "If you love me, Valerian, accept me, such as I am; with my errors, if I am deceived; with my lights, if, as I believe, I possess the truth. As for me, were your belief still more antagonistic to mine, it would not prevent me from accepting you as my spouse."

"I am ready to sacrifice everything for you; everything except my duty to God. If my faith were the work of my imagination, I would willingly renounce it to please you; but I receive my faith from the Church, who holds it from God. You hold yours only from a man."

"And my reason."

"Which leads you astray."

"After all, what matters my error, since it cannot hinder me from loving you, and making you happy?"

"It is possible that you might still love me, even though you did not adore the same God as I; but it would be impossible for you to make me happy. There is no happiness without the union of souls, and how could such union exist where one soul blasphemes what the other adores."

"We can pray together to God the Father."

"But we could not bless together the God, who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven and became incarnate."

"I may be mistaken, but I now recognize that you never loved me as much as I believed."

"O, Thalia! I love you a hundred times more than myself; but less than Jesus Christ. . . . I go away with a broken heart; nevertheless, I hope you will recognize your error, and that one day this betrothal ring will reunite us in the love of the same God and Redeemer."

Valerian returned home overwhelmed with grief. He cursed Arius, and wondered how Thalia could have allowed herself to be fascinated by his perfidious doctrines; he accused Metrodorus for not having more carefully watched over his daughter. Nor was Vitus less afflicted, and he hastened to inform the Sovereign Pontiff how Arianism had overstepped the boundaries of the East, and now menaced Rome. Pope Sylvester begged the Emperor to take measures to hinder the progress of the new heresy. At the same time, Constantine received a letter from Eusebius of Nicomedia, complaining of the patriarch of Alexandria, and another from the Egyptian bishops complaining of the intrigues of Arius and his partisans. In order to pacify all parties, he wrote a letter bearing the title: "Constantine to Alexander and Arius." Had he not been deceived by Eusebius, he would never have placed these two names in the same rank, as if they designated persons of equal esteem.

The Emperor sent this letter to Alexandria by one of the most illustrious men of that epoch, Osius, Bishop of Cordova. Osius was born in 257,

in Spain, and probably in Cordova itself, which church he governed from the year 295. He gloriously confessed the faith in the persecution raised by Maximian Hercules in 203. His courage rendered him famous throughout the entire Church, and his consummate prudence won him the affection and respect of Constantine. Osius, in bearing the Emperor's letter to Alexandria, was charged to appease the troubles raised by Arianism. He acquitted himself of his mission with as much zeal as wisdom, and assembled a council in which were examined all the questions relating to the Incarnation of the Word, and the mystery of the Holy Trinity; but his efforts to secure the peace of the Church were unavailing. The Arians carried their fury so far as to mutilate the statues of Constantine. The Emperor's courtiers urged him to punish this outrage severely; but he made them a beautiful answer, of which Flavian afterwards reminded Theodosius on a like occasion. Passing his hand over his face, he said, smiling, that "he did not find himself hurt by the stones thrown at his statues." He now saw that Eusebius of Nicomedia had not told him all the truth, and Osius, on his return, informed him more fully of the matter. Seeing that his indulgence only rendered the Arians more passionate and headstrong, he wrote another letter which he caused to be published in all the cities of the empire. In this circular, he traced a very unflattering portrait of Arius, of his gloomy temper, his emaciated body, dishevelled hair, and splenetic

countenance, on which were depicted anger and vanity.

This circular, which two of Constantine's officers carried to Alexandria and publicly read, covered Arius with confusion, but did not convert him. An emperor's letter might easily put his legions on the march and rouse into action the prefects of all the provinces, but it had no power in the domain of ideas, and could not change the opinions of a sectary. To the revolt of the mind, spiritual authority must be opposed. A universal council, composed of bishops from all parts of the world, could alone proclaim the faith of the Church, and oppose it in the East, against the arbitrary systems of heresy. Constantine wrote respectful letters to all the bishops, begging them to assemble at Nice, one of the principal cities of Bithynia. To facilitate their reunion, he placed all the post-carriages of the empire at the disposition of the bishops.

Arius wrote to Thalia :

"At last the day of victory is approaching. Eusebius has had influence enough to make Constantine choose the city of Nice for the assembling of a General Council. The bishop of this city, which is situated a few leagues from Nicomedia, is entirely devoted to us. All the Eastern bishops are for us. Alexander and his dear Athanasius will not have full play. We shall impose our will on the Council, and make it solemnly declare that the Word is only a creature."

When Valerian heard of the approaching convo-

cation of a General Council, he went to Metrodorus's house, which he had studiously avoided since the day which, instead of being joyful, had been so sorrowful for him.

"The voice of the Church is about to be heard at Nice," said he to Thalia. "All the bishops of the world, the partizans of Arius as well as others, are invited to take part in a General Council. If the Council declare that the system of Arius may be accepted without betraying the faith, I promise to accept it. Will you, on your part, promise me to renounce this system if it be contrary to the doctrine revealed by Jesus Christ?"

"I promise you," replied Thalia.

"I thank you for that word, which gives me hope."

"Do you think of going to Nice?" asked Metrodorus.

"I shall follow the Emperor, who is about setting out for Nicomedia, that he may reach Nice at the end of the Council. Shall I have the pleasure of meeting you there?"

"I must be wherever he keeps his court; I cannot, then, avoid going to Bithynia."

"Adieu, then, till we meet at Nice."





CHAPTER X.

THE FIRST GENERAL COUNCIL.

THE Emperor alone could invite the bishops of the entire world to assemble on a certain day in a city near that in which he resided; he alone could have placed at the disposal of the august guests the conveyances and post-horses of the empire; he alone could have defrayed, out of the public treasury, the travelling expenses of the bishops and the costs of their entertainment during the session of the Council; he alone could have assured them sufficient protection, and the respect due to their sacred character. More than once, heretofore, the bishops of Italy or of Roman Africa, of Egypt and Syria, had met in local councils or provincial synods; but the initiative of an ecumenical council—that is, of an assembly to which are called *all* the bishops of the world—could only be undertaken, in 325, by the Emperor himself.

Nevertheless, had Constantine alone summoned the bishops—had not the Sovereign Pontiff approved the convocation and presided, in the person of his legates, over the assembled prelates—that convocation, however imposing by the number and sanctity of its members—would not have been a

General Council. The presence of the visible head of the Church or his representatives is absolutely necessary to give the authority of an ecumenical council to a convocation of bishops. When the voice of the pastors of souls is alone heard without the voice of him who is the stone on which Jesus Christ has built His spiritual edifice, it is not the universal Church that speaks.

The relations of Constantine with Pope Sylvester leave no room to doubt that the Bishop of Rome had been informed of the Emperor's intentions before any other bishop. True, we know of no particular correspondence between Constantine and Sylvester on the subject of the convocation of the Council of Nice, but what proves that the Pope gave his whole approbation to a measure which was to manifest the triumph of Christianity and arrest the progress of heresy, is that, being unable himself to preside over the Council, he appointed, as his legates, Osius, Bishop of Cordova—who enjoyed so deservedly the Emperor's confidence—and two priests of the Roman Church, Vitus and Vincent, who were to be his particular legates, taken from beside him (*a latere*).

Valerian went to Nice sooner than he had expected; for when Constantine arrived at Nicomedia, he commissioned him to go, with his legion, to Nice, there to maintain order, and see that nothing interfered with the freedom of the bishops' deliberations. In the beginning of June, Valerian, at the head of his troops, reached the last milestone of the military road which connected Nice with Nicomedia.

He saw extended before him the city which was to acquire immortal renown from the approaching Council. The sun was already sinking towards the horizon, and the shadow of the hills lay upon the city, but the lofty walls of the church dedicated to the Eternal Wisdom were still bathed in light. The ruined temples of Juno, Apollo, and Victory still proudly raised aloft the columns of their porticos—images of conquered paganism, which yet tried to hold its ground, and retard the hour of its total disappearance.

“It is here, then,” said Valerian, gazing on the city, on which the shadows were gathering more heavily; “it is here, then, that we are to behold an assembly more august than the Roman senate. Here shall the infallible voice of the Church be heard: whoever will not hear that voice, must be to the faithful a pagan and a publican. Will Thalia consent to hear it? I must hope, that I may not be entirely overwhelmed by the most bitter grief. My God, subdue her pride! O Christ, O Saviour, make her feel Thy Divinity! Draw from the seductions of heresy a soul that is so dear to me. Let not the impious reveries of Arius make her any longer a traitor to her faith and her love. Spare my heart so painful a sacrifice.”

The oat harvest was already over when Valerian came to Nice to fulfil the Emperor's commission; but the ungathered wheat still rose and fell in golden waves in the fields of the surrounding country. The roads were crowded with farmers

bringing various kinds of produce, for an extraordinary concourse of strangers being expected, the Emperor had ordered abundant supplies of provisions to be stored up, and every day carts laden with fruits and vegetables, whole droves of sheep and beeves were brought into the city.

The crowds of persons from all parts that filled the streets and sought for lodging, surpassed all the previous calculations of the people. The bishops, fully comprehending the meaning and extent of the appeal addressed to them, eagerly responded to it, and nearly all the churches in the provinces were represented. About three hundred and eighteen bishops took part in the Council, and, with them, a great number of priests, deacons, and inferior clergy came to be witnesses of the most magnificent spectacle it is possible to behold in this world. Never had such an august deliberative assembly treated, with such imposing majesty, questions of so elevated a character. What is the intimate life of God? How has He made Himself known to us? Who is Jesus Christ, who comes to renew the face of the earth? What are His precise relations with men and with God? Such were the questions on which more than three hundred bishops were to meditate. The Church expected of them the exact formula of her faith, the expression of her gratitude and her love for the God who became incarnate for our salvation.

The bishops were nearly all old men, who had confessed the faith during the persecution. The

instruments of torture, the chains and fetters of the dungeons had torn their bodies without enfeebling their souls, and they bore on their members the glorious marks of their wounds. At that epoch, the bishops were generally chosen from among men distinguished for the liveliness of their faith, the orthodoxy of their theology, the sanctity of their lives, or those who in the times of persecution, had signalized themselves by their courage, or those, in fine, whom God had favored with the gift of miracles. There were, it is true, to be found, here and there, ambitious men who had, by intrigue, imposed themselves on the choice of the faithful; but they were not numerous in the Council of Nice. The Arians could not dazzle by the artifices of their dialectics an assembly of such prelates, some of whom, doubtless, were recommended solely by their piety, but the majority of whom were distinguished by their knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, their oratorical talents, and their perspicacity.

When the Pope's legates arrived, Valerian offered them hospitality in the house assigned himself, near the palace, in which Constantine and his courtiers were to reside during the closing days of the Council. By thus receiving as his guests the representatives of the Sovereign Pontiff, he had the pleasure of meeting the greater number of the bishops; for all, as they arrived, went to salute the venerable Bishop of Cordova and the two Roman priests who accompanied him, and to consult with

him on what course should be taken with Arius and his adherents.

"I suppose the name of the deacon Athanasius is not unknown to you," said Vitus, one day, to Valerian.

"Who has not heard him spoken of as the most formidable adversary of Arianism?"

"Would you like to see him?"

"I desire nothing more ardently."

"Follow me into the hall which you have yielded to Osius, for the reception of his visitors. There you will find the Bishop Alexander and his secretary."

With what emotion did Valerian gaze on the venerable patriarch! None of the bishops attracted so much attention as he, in whose diocese had first appeared the heresy which occasioned the first General Council. The majestic old age of the patriarch rendered more touching the youth of Athanasius, who remained modestly near him, as an affectionate son near his father. He kept silence, as if his age did not allow of his voice being heard among those of old men. The patriarch gave the Pope's legates the history of the rise and progress of Arianism, and told how the heresiarch worked on the imagination of weak minds; how he addressed himself by preference to the lower classes of the people and to women. He spoke of the poem *Thalia*, and of the young girl of that name, who was distinguished among all the fanatical admirers of Arius. He knew not with what

sorrowful interest Valerian listened to every word regarding her. Alexander went on to speak of the female processions organized by her in the streets of Alexandria, and of the scandal she had given the faithful in St. Mark's Church, by interrupting the homily of Athanasius by her impious exclamations. To Valerian this was an unexpected revelation, for Thalia had never dared to tell him all she had done for Arius. This, then, explained the fatal change operated in her, and her obstinate attachment to the new heresy.

"Will she, at least, be faithful to the promise she has given me?" he asked himself in painful anxiety. "Will she attach herself to the true faith, when the Church shall speak by the mouths of her bishops, who, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, are about to define the revealed doctrine?"

Vitus, who felt how painful to Valerian must be all these details, turned the conversation as soon as respect allowed, and by questioning Athanasius on the solitaries of the Thebais, obliged him to come forth from his enforced silence. The subject was one on which he always spoke most happily, and Valerian soon recognized his eloquence. Athanasius related many traits in the life of St. Anthony, and took delight in repeating his conversation with some pretended philosophers who were travelling in quest of the truth.

"Several philosophers," said he, "attracted by Anthony's reputation, presented themselves at the door of his cell.

“‘Why have you come so far to interrogate an ignorant man?’ asked he.

“‘You are not such,’ answered they; ‘for all the world speaks of your ability.’

“He proposed to them this dilemma: ‘Do you believe me foolish or do you believe me wise? If you think me foolish, you have uselessly taken great trouble in coming here; but if you think me wise, you ought to do as I do, and embrace a life like mine.’

“One among them said: ‘Your wisdom is not perfect, since you have studied neither the sciences nor literature.’

“‘Did the sciences exist before reason?’ he asked.

“They answered that reason had preceded study.

“‘It is better, then,’ continued he, ‘to have much reason with little science, than much science with little reason.’

“The philosophers then discussed with Anthony the fundamental dogma of Christianity—the Divinity of Jesus Christ—which the Arians dared to deny, and which the Council of Nice was about to proclaim. They were astonished at the Incarnation of the Word, but the Greco-Latin polytheism is nothing but a false and gross application of the belief of the human race in the union of the Divinity with our nature.

“‘Which is the more reasonable,’ asked Anthony, ‘to say that the Word of God has taken a human body for the salvation and happiness of man—in order that, by the union of the Divine nature with

the human, He might render men participants of a spiritual and divine nature—or to wish that the Divinity be like animals, and, on that account, to adore cows, serpents, or figures of men? for such are the acts of religion practised by those whom you account as sages.’

“The pagan philosophers could not comprehend the act of love accomplished on the Cross, and would not consent to adore a God made man, who had allowed Himself to be crucified. But was it reasonable in them to be shocked at a death generously undergone for the salvation of the human race,—they who were not shocked at the abominable crimes attributed to Jupiter and Saturn?

“‘This Cross which we honor,’ said Anthony to them, ‘is a mark of magnanimity and courage, since it is certain proof of the contempt of death; but the actions of your gods are dishonorable. Their history, as related by your poets, is but a tissue of shameless profligacies.’

“He then proved the Divinity of Jesus Christ by His miracles accomplished before innumerable witnesses.

“‘Why do you look only at the *cross* of Jesus Christ? Why do not you admire His resurrection? Why not speak of the dead whom He resuscitated, the blind whose eyes He opened, the lepers and paralytics whom He healed, of so many miracles which prove that He is not only man but also God?

“Nor has Jesus Christ proved His Divinity only by prodigies wrought during His mortal life. Living in God, He ceases not to accomplish superhuman works which are witnessed by all ages and all generations. Is not the establishment of the Christian religion, despite the persecutions of emperors, despite the revolt of pride and the passions, a divine work?’ He reminded them of a miracle being daily operated in their sight, saying: ‘The adoration of your false gods is decaying among you, while our faith is making new conquests on every side. With all your syllogisms, you cannot persuade a single person to pass from Christianity to paganism, yet we, in teaching the faith of Jesus Christ, destroy the fabric of your superstitions. It is not, then, the Cross which merits your contempt, but rather idolatry, which flies at its approach. Admire this—no one persecutes your religion: it is honored in all your cities. The Christians, on the contrary, are persecuted: nevertheless, our religion spreads; yours is expiring, despite your strenuous efforts to give it life.’

“Anthony went on to prove to the philosophers the divinity of the Christian religion, by the incontestable fact that it alone has incited mankind to the most heroic virtues. When did the knowledge of God beam so brightly on souls, when have chastity and temperance shone with so pure a lustre, when has death been so easily vanquished, if not since the Cross of Christ has been raised over the world? Who can doubt it, on beholding

in the Church so many martyrs despising death because of their love for Jesus Christ, so many virgins preserving themselves chaste and pure? Are not these evident signs that the Christian faith is the only religion that honors God as He should be honored?"

While Athanasius was thus transporting his auditors to the deserts of Thebais, around the cell of Anthony, in the midst of the monasteries founded by Pacomius in the oasis of Tabenna, Valerian could not but envy the happiness of the anchorets. Withdrawn from the world and its deceptions, they had rooted out of their hearts every fibre of terrestrial love, and knew not the bitter suffering of disappointed affection.

When alone with Vitus, Valerian exclaimed, sorrowfully :

"Why did not the Lord strike Arius with His vengeance, at the moment when he began to propagate his errors?"

"Let us not yield to fear like men of little faith," answered Vitus. "If He permits His enemies to do evil, it is to draw from it greater good. The Arian heresy, so deplorable in itself, gives to the Church, which had scarcely attained to liberty, the occasion of holding, for the first time, her grand assemblies for the solid establishment of discipline, for the definition and proclamation of her faith. The Council of Nice will be a remarkable event in the history of the Church.

"Obtain from God, by your prayers, my dear

friend, that Thalia, who is coming to Nice, may submit to the authority of the Church, and recognize that she has been deceived by Arius."

"Let us go pray together in the great church. A young bishop of Cyprus, whose eloquence is much spoken of, preaches there every day to the faithful."

The great church, in which the bishops were to hold the first sessions of the Council before assembling in the imperial palace, was built only about twelve years. The interior of it was covered with variegated marble, and a bronze balustrade separated the apsis from the nave. Before the sanctuary hung a rich silken curtain embroidered in gold. The pillars which supported the edifice had been taken from some abandoned pagan temple.

When Vitus and Valerian entered the church, the Bishop Triphillius was delivering a homily, in which he explained that passage in the Gospel wherein our Saviour bids a paralytic to take up his bed and walk. The faithful were listening with profound recollection and attention to the eloquent and pious words of the orator. Triphillius, accustomed to great nicety in his language, would not employ the common word *krabatton* which we read in the Gospel, but substituted therefor the word *skimpoda*, thus making our Saviour say to the paralytic: "Arise; *take up thy couch*, and walk." Suddenly an aged man, seated below the ambon, arose, and, amid the profound silence of the assembly, said to the orator:

“Do you think you have a right to correct the evangelist? Are you ashamed to employ the same expressions as are in the sacred Scriptures?”

The young bishop blushed, made a gesture of excuse, and repeating the sentence, employed the expression found in the text: “Take up thy *bed* and walk.”

When Valerian came out of the church he asked Vitus,

“Who was that old man who dared to interrupt the preacher?”

“He is the venerable Spiridion, Bishop of Tremithus, a city situated on the eastern coast of Cyprus, near Salamis. He doubtless wished to give a lesson in humility to his dear disciple Triphillius, and teach him the respect we should have for the text of the gospel. This Spiridion was at first a simple shepherd, living humbly on the produce of his flock, with his wife and his daughter, Irene; but such was his virtue that he was thought worthy to be a pastor of souls. Raised to the episcopate, yet anxious to remember his former condition, he still attends to his sheep, and leads them, from time to time, to the meadows which surround Tremithus. One night thieves broke into his sheep-fold, but found themselves unable either to perpetrate the intended theft or make their escape. The next morning Spiridion found them overwhelmed with confusion at being detected in such a crime. They acknowledged their guilt, and implored him not to give them up to justice. ‘You have taken much

trouble,' answered he, 'to get in here. I do not wish it to be useless.' He gave them a sheep, adding, 'Instead of coming to steal from me during the night, you would have done better to come and ask me for it during the day.'"

Valerian and Vitus, leaving the city, walked slowly in the fields, conversing about the holy personages whom Providence had assembled in Nice, of whose sublime virtues they should now have a more intimate knowledge. They returned by the gate nearest the imperial palace, but were surprised at seeing an immense crowd gathered in the public square.

"I think I see Bishop Spiridion in the midst of that crowd," said Valerian.

"It is really he," answered Vitus. "Let us approach."

The attention of all cultivated minds was turned to the venerable senate of bishops congregated at Nice, and many pagan philosophers had come to the city, either to argue against those aged men whom they hoped to reduce to silence by the force of their subtle syllogisms, or to mock at the simplicity of their faith or the austerity of their morals. Arius counted on them to increase his party. One of those sophists paraded through the city, boasting that he would compel all who should engage in argument with him, to acknowledge themselves vanquished. Near the palace he met the Bishop of Tremithus, who accepted his challenge. God had chosen that holy old man, more accustomed to

prayer than to argument, to confound the sophist. Instead of replying to his arguments, he, in presence of the immense crowd gathered around them, said in the tone of inspiration :

"In the name of Jesus Christ hear what is the truth. There is one only God who has created the heavens and earth, and has given a soul to man formed out of the slime of the earth. He has created all things visible and invisible by His Word, and has established them by the virtue of His Spirit. This Word, this Wisdom, whom we call the Son, taking pity on the wanderings of men, became man, and assumed our flesh in the womb of a virgin. The Son of God, by suffering death and rising again, has given us eternal life. We believe that He shall come one day to judge all our actions. Do you believe all this?"

Hearing these words pronounced with all the authority of a prophet, the philosopher stood in silence, as if he had never learned the art of disputation. Suddenly, being interiorly enlightened, he cried out :

"Yes, I believe."

"If you believe," replied the venerable old man, "arise, come with me to the church and receive the mark and seal of faith."

The philosopher turned to the crowd :

"Hear, all you who make profession of science. While I heard only words I answered by words, and I, by reasoning refuted all arguments brought against me. But when a superhuman force has

taken the place of words, human wisdom cannot sustain that force; man cannot resist God. For this reason, if any among you have felt as I felt during this dispute, let him believe in Jesus Christ, and follow this venerable man by whom God has spoken!"

The crowd, with admiration, heard the philosopher, lately so proud, now declare himself a Christian, and rejoice at having been vanquished.

"See," said Vitus, "how the Lord, according to His promise, confounds the wisdom of sages."

"Ah, that He would thus dissipate the clouds that obscure Thalia's faith!"

"Alas! who knows but that God has made her feel her errors, but she has voluntarily closed her eyes to the light that illuminated her conscience."

"Ah, I beg of you leave me some hope!"

"Why should you lose it? It is always possible to return to the true faith."

As the two friends were about entering their dwelling, they perceived a young man in the philosopher's cloak who walked modestly on, paying no attention to the crowd gathered round the imperial palace.

"I recognize an excellent friend," said Vitus, "whom I shall be happy to present to you. He is from Cæsarea, but we studied Latin and Greek together at Rome. Let us go meet him, for he is so absorbed in thought that he would pass by a person without seeing him."

"Has Hermogenes forgotten his friends?" asked

Vitus, laying his hand familiarly on the young man's shoulder.

"Is it you, my dear Vitus? I am truly delighted to meet you."

"Have you been inquiring at the palace on what day the Emperor will leave Nicomedia to come to Nice?"

"No; I have been to announce to Osius that our blessed Bishop Leontius has arrived."

"Leontius is venerated as a martyr throughout Cappadocia," said Vitus, turning to Valerian. "He has confessed Christ's divinity, under tortures, before coming to proclaim it at Nice. I had hoped," continued he, addressing Hermogenes, "that you would reach here about the same time as I, but you could not separate from your bishop, and Leontius, doubtless, could not start sooner."

"We stopped some days at Nazianzen, for Leontius wished to bring to Christianity an old man who had been seduced by a sect scarcely known out of Cappadocia, whose religion is a medley of Judaism and Paganism. This old man, whose name is Gregory, is esteemed by everybody on account of his probity and the purity of his morals, and has filled the most important public offices, without ever employing them for his personal advantage. His wife, Nonna, descended from a long line of Christian ancestors, by prayers, aided Leontius, and his efforts have been successful. Convinced of the truth of the Christian religion, Gregory asked for and received Baptism. The

sectaries whom he abandoned have become his persecutors; but our blessed Father promised him that God would reward him by giving him, in his old age, a son, so long vainly expected. He predicted that this son should render illustrious the name of his father, and that of the little city of Nazianzen, where he will edify the Church by his virtues, and delight it by the eloquence of his writings."

As Hermogenes was saying the last word, he bowed in respectful salutation to an old man who, on the other side of the street, was walking with difficulty, and steadying his feeble steps by the aid of a stick.

"Who is that aged man whose noble countenance bears the impress of benevolence?" asked Valerian.

"He is blessed Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, born in Patara, in Syria. In his youth he lost his parents, who left him a considerable fortune; but he sold all his goods, and distributed the price among the poor. Learning that a poor man, whose three daughters, for want of dowry, could not be married, was strongly tempted to procure them wealth by dishonorable means, he went, during the night, and threw in his window a sum sufficient to portion one of his daughters. Without inquiring how he had obtained the unexpected wealth, the father hastened to marry his eldest daughter. Nicholas, in the same manner, portioned his second and third daughters, who were also happily married.

“When he had disposed of all his wealth, Nicholas undertook a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Returning by sea from Palestine, he predicted to the pilot a violent tempest, which in reality came to pass; but when the passengers gave themselves up for lost, seeing the vessel almost engulfed by the waves, Nicholas prayed, and the tempest was appeased. On his arrival in Syria he passed through Myra, where the bishops were then deliberating on the choice of a successor to the bishop who had just died. In a vision, they were ordered to choose as bishop the first Christian bearing the name of Nicholas who should enter the church the next day. Thus was he chosen bishop of Myra. God has favored him with the gift of miracles. Three military tribunes, victims of a calumny and condemned by the governor, Ablavius, to be beheaded, remembered in their prison how powerful Nicholas is with God, and recommended themselves to his prayers.

“He appeared to the Governor with a threatening countenance, convinced him of the innocence of the condemned, and commanded him to set them at liberty. Ablavius countermanded the sentence of execution, and restored to favor the tribunes unjustly accused. During the persecution of Licinius Nicholas was thrown into prison, but Constantine's triumph restored him to his flock.”

These touching accounts—revealing, as they did, the sanctity of the bishops—strengthened Valerian's faith and rendered his piety more ardent.

“Throughout my whole life,” said he to his

friends, "I will thank God for having granted me the grace of seeing and hearing so many holy personages who are the glory of the Church, the continuators of the labors of the apostles, the guides and consolers of their people. I shall never forget the sweet emotions that fill my heart at this time; and the holy old men who, from all parts of the world, have come hither to preserve from all change the revealed doctrine of which they are the depositaries, shall ever be present to my memory."

"I do not believe," said Vitus, "that one could dream of a greater happiness than that of assisting at a General Council."

"There is only one happiness which can surpass it," said Hermogenes. "It is that we shall experience when we shall meet in heaven, in the assembly of the saints."

Vitus introduced to Valerian Eustathius of Antioch, who had suffered for the faith under Diocletian; Marcellus of Ancyra, one of the bishops most energetic in combating Arianism; Potamon, Bishop of Heraclea, on the borders of the Nile; and Paphnutius, Bishop of the Upper Thebais, both of whom had lost the right eye in the persecution; Cecilian, Bishop of Carthage; and Nicasius, Bishop of Die, who was the sole representative of the Gallic bishops in the Council of Nice.

Nothing would have been wanting to Valerian's happiness had he not feared that Arius would persist in his errors, despite the decisions of the Council, and that Thalia would imitate his obstinacy.

A friend whom he had never hoped to see again met him and cast himself into his arms. It was the poet Optatian.

"What! you here?" cried Valerian, as happy as surprised. "You have, then, privately left the place of your exile?"

"I am fully reconciled to the Emperor."

"After his baptism, he could not fail to pardon you."

"I should have waited a long time for my pardon had I not thought of composing some charming little poems, under the title of *Panegyric dedicated to Constantine Augustus*, in which I was not sparing of praise. My muse has renewed the prodigies of Orpheus: she has conquered the master of the world."

"It was easier to touch Constantine's heart than to subdue wild beasts."

"The Emperor was so charmed with my verses that he revoked the sentence of my banishment to Nisibus, and wrote me this flattering letter."

Optatian handed his friend a silken case, which enclosed Constantine's letter as if it were a jewel. Valerian read aloud:

"I have seen with joy the efforts of your genius to add the harmony of a new lyre to that of the ancient lyre. I know not if any one else has ever, amid so many obstacles, written such ingenious verses, or has so interwoven throughout the regular verses descriptive letters, which constitute an integral part of the principal poem, yet can nevertheless be divided into divers figures of other verses, presenting different thoughts in a new sense. The

present of your muse has been very agreeable to me."

"I hope," said Valerian, "that we, after the Emperor, shall have the pleasure of admiring your ingenious productions."

"Whenever you wish. Here is one of my poems, which will give you an idea of the prodigious labor I imposed on myself. Read these thirty-eight verses. You would not at first perceive all the trouble they have cost me, but after you have read them, lay on the sheet on which my poem is written, this paper in which I have cut the figure of a ship. Now the part of the poem which is visible through the hole constitutes a distinct little poem, in which all the laws of metre are faithfully observed."

Valerian could not conceal his amazement when, after having read the poem, he covered it with the cut sheet. The letters which remained visible formed a perfect figure of a ship, but instead of their being disconnected, they formed words which composed hexameter verse."

"Truly," cried he, "I never saw such literary ingenuity."

Optatian showed him another poem, so arranged that, by reading from the top to the bottom the first letter of every verse, one read an hexameter verse. The same thing occurred if one read from the bottom to the top the last letter of all the verses, or when one followed the letters which formed the two diagonals of the poetic square.

"What patience and application it must have required, my dear Optatian, to win such success in this kind of composition?"

"I had nothing better to occupy my leisure during my exile."

"Did you suffer much in the city of Nisibis, which we might well call the end of the world, and which seems rather to belong to the Persian empire than to the Roman?"

"I cannot complain. The bishop of that city was so kind to me I could scarcely believe myself in a foreign land."

"Will he be present at the Council?"

"He is here, attended by no suite save the deacon Ephrem and myself."

"Is he any way famous?"

"James, Bishop of Nisibis, is one of the glories of the Syriac Church. In his youth he embraced the solitary life of the anchorets, and spent the winter in a cavern, but the rest of the year in the woods on the top of a mountain, his only food being roots and wild herbs, his only garment, a tunic and mantle of goat-skin. The less attention he bestowed on his body, the more was his soul enriched with supernatural lights. Despite the resistance made by his humility, he was raised to the priesthood, and preached in the country districts of Persia. He found in a village some young girls so proud of their beauty that they went every day to admire themselves in the clear waters of a fountain. By a double miracle, he dried up the

fountain which fed their vanity, and turned their hair completely white.

"On the death of the Bishop of Nisibis the people unanimously demanded James for their pastor, notwithstanding his severity. He acquits himself scrupulously of all the functions of the episcopate; takes care of the poor, of widows, orphans, and the oppressed, and instructs his people by his writings as well as by his preaching."

"I suppose you find it difficult to appreciate his eloquence, for the Syriac tongue bears no resemblance to that of Demosthenes or Cicero?"

"I did not spend all the time of my exile in composing masterpieces of poetry; I also learned Syriac."

"Most assuredly, you love trials of strength."

"I do not speak fluently that language, which is somewhat harsh; but I can readily understand it, which procures me many delightful literary pleasures. The Syrians have, at this time, a poet, who as far surpasses Pindar and Horace as the cypress a feeble twig. One can only compare him to the prophets or the Psalmist of Israel. He does not, like me, work laboriously over his verses in the silence of the cabinet. He awaits the inspiration, and when it comes, sublime strophes flow from his lips as an impetuous torrent. He thinks not of flattering the ear or charming the imagination, but of elevating the mind above common thoughts, to transport it to the regions nearest heaven. His poetry is preaching."

"What is the name of that poet, about whom you are so enthusiastic?"

"He is called Ephrem or Ephraïm."

"Shall we see him here?"

"Most certainly; the Bishop of Nisibis brought him with him. He at first refused to come, saying he was not worthy to assist at so august an assembly, but the bishop overcame his modesty."

Metrodorus and his daughter were among the last to arrive at Nice, whither they came, only when Arius and Eusebius left Nicomedia. The specious and insinuating words of Eusebius exercised over Thalia's mind an influence even more fatal than that of Arius. Might she not remain faithful to a doctrine taught by the bishop of the second city of the empire? Eusebius exaggerated the progress of Arianism and his authority over the Eastern bishops. He again promised Metrodorus an episcopal see, and the latter, although he did not repose entire faith in his promises, yet kept his doubts to himself, not to grieve his daughter, who was intoxicated with the praises lavished on her by a bishop. Thalia wished that Valerian could but hear Eusebius; she felt he would be convinced by his luminous exposition of the Arian doctrine.

Theognis, Bishop of Nice, a declared partisan of the new heresy, received into his house Arius and Eusebius, and also Metrodorus and his daughter. The rhetorician hastened to inform Valerian of their arrival, and begged him to visit them. He

still hoped that his sincere love for Thalia would surmount the barriers which difference in religious belief had suddenly raised. When Valerian learned that they were the guests of the Bishop of Nice, with Arius and Eusebius, and that he could only meet them in the presence of the heresiarch, he was too deeply grieved to dare to go alone, and he begged Vitus to accompany him.

They found assembled in the house of Theognis about fifteen bishops, who had united with Eusebius of Nicomedia to defend in the Council the errors of Arius. Among them were Maris of Chalcedon, Patrophilus of Scythopolis, Narcissus of Neronias, Menophantes of Ephesus, and Eusebius of Cæsarea. After having exchanged the usual compliments with Metrodorus and Thalia, Valerian cast a scornful glance on Arius, who was seated in the post of honor near Thalia; but Arius returned his look by a smile of affected sweetness.

"I am happy," he said, "to know the young hero of whom my friends have so often spoken, and I pray that your union with the learned daughter of Metrodorus may be speedily consummated."

"Then pray that the errors which lead souls astray, may be dissipated by the submission of heretics to the authority of the Church."

"The Church is dear to us, without doubt, but the truth is still dearer."

"There is no religious truth outside the teaching of the Church," exclaimed Vitus.

"We have come to Nice to be united; not to be divided," said one of the bishops, in a soft voice.

Valerian turned towards the speaker, who was a man of about fifty years of age, of medium height. His haughty bearing contrasted strangely with the sweetness of his voice, and his restless eyes expressed, by turns, benevolence, hatred, admiration, disdain. He wore a robe of silk, richly embroidered, and gold buckles ornamented his shoes. Valerian rightly supposed that he was Eusebius of Nicomedia.

"True union of spirit can be obtained only by a candid and complete acceptation of the same revealed doctrine."

"How can we accept what is contrary to reason?" said Thalia. "Let us hope that so many bishops assembled in council will know how to form a simple and reasonable creed, and adapt Christianity to the actual state of minds."

"Councils do not compose dogmas," responded Vitus. "They explain, they define the doctrine taught by Jesus Christ, and transmitted by His apostles. They may modify rules of discipline and adapt them to the divers conditions of the material and moral life of the faithful, but they absolutely cannot modify doctrine. It is contained in the Holy Scripture and in tradition, as in a sacred and immutable depository. Councils can only draw from that depository the revealed doctrine, and give it human expression, more clear, more precise, more directly opposed to the affirmations or negations of heresy. They never create a new dogma. They confine themselves to state and explain the ancient dogma."

"But when a Council is deceived," said Arius, "another Council must correct its error."

"A General Council cannot be deceived in questions regarding faith. Jesus Christ founded His Church only to transmit to us His doctrine. He must then make her transmit it faithfully. He has engaged Himself to do so, for He has promised His Church to remain with her until the consummation of ages. Now, as a General Council is essentially the Church teaching, Jesus Christ necessarily assists the General Council to prevent its being deceived in the definitions it gives of revealed doctrine. If it were to treat of physical or historical questions, having no bearing on dogma, it might be deceived, and its decisions would not be matter for faith, because Jesus Christ did not found His Church to teach human science; nor did He promise to assist her in teaching it. But whenever a Council, interrogating Scripture and tradition, defines revealed doctrine, it cannot be deceived. Jesus Christ, faithful to His promises, preserves it from all error; hinders it from teaching as revealed a doctrine not taught by Himself, or from falsely interpreting what He has revealed. Consequently, He aids it in defining whether such or such a religious opinion is conformable to His doctrine. Finally, He assists her in choosing, from among the various words of human language, those terms which may express His doctrine with more precision or expansion, those terms which may best express an error and condemn it."

"The infallible authority of the General Council supposes the Divinity of Christ, which we do not admit," said Arius, in a low voice.

These words would have provoked another discussion had Vitus overheard them, but Eusebius of Nicomedia, who was not fond of disputes, turned the conversation. They spoke of the number of bishops in the city, of its monuments, of the *fêtes* the Emperor proposed to hold in Nicomedia to celebrate the anniversary of his victory over Licinius.

"Do you believe those bishops will submit to the decisions of the Council?" asked Valerian of Vitus, after they had taken leave of Theognis and his guests.

"Some will accept them sincerely, others only in appearance; several will openly combat them."

"How could they believe in the infallibility of the Church when they deny Christ's Divinity?"

"I regret to see among the minority of Arian bishops Eusebius of Cæsarea, who is, assuredly, the most learned man of the day. The defender of Catholic doctrine, yet deceived by the sophisms of Arius, he would merit severe reproaches had he not rendered great services to religion by his two learned works of the *Preparation* and *Demonstration of the Gospel*. Gifted with a prodigious memory and a decided taste for history, he yet does not possess, in the same degree, the theological spirit. He is sensible to flattery and most desirous of winning the Emperor's favor. I believe that, at bottom, he is firmly attached to the Church, but, ruled by

Eusebius of Nicomedia, is unable to distinguish promptly, or to avow frankly, how false is Arianism and how contrary to revealed doctrine."

"I fear that Thalia is more and more infatuated with Arius and his system."

"Her eyes would be opened were she to have recourse to prayer, and say to God, from the bottom of her heart, 'Lord, grant that I may see!'"

"Perhaps if I were to silence my scruples, and marry her despite her attachment to heresy, I might win her from the fatal influences which surround her, and lead her gradually back to the true faith."

"Believe me, my dear Valerian, make no contract with impiety. If Thalia persist in her errors after the decisions of the Council, she is not worthy of you."





CHAPTER XI.

THREE CHRISTIAN POETS.

ONE day Optatian entered Valerian's house, exclaiming joyously :

"How many pleasures are reserved for us in Nice ! Here we find gathered great saints, great orators, great poets."

"When will you introduce me to that Ephrem of whom I have heard you speak so enthusiastically ?"

"This very day, if you wish. But I have found here two other Christian poets, one of whom speaks the language of Virgil, the other that of Homer."

"I only know that poesy, like eloquence, needed Jesus Christ to purify its inspirations."

"The Latin poet is a young Spaniard called Juvencius. He has remarkable talent, and, at the same time, charming modesty. Less anxious for his own glory than for the good of the faithful, he has undertaken a difficult but most important work. He proposes to relate in a poem, divided into four books, all the history of the Gospel. It is his care to make it agree in every particular with the accounts of the four Evangelists, and he changes as little as possible in his verses, the

simple narration of the inspired text. He has been greatly aided in the plan of his poem by the Harmony of the Gospels, composed by Ammonius of Alexandria.

"It is natural that the first epopee modulated by a Christian lyre should have as its theme the grand fact of the Redemption. The rage of Achilles and the foundation of Rome are events of little importance, compared with the regeneration of the human race by the crucifixion and death of the God-man."

"The Greek poet, whom I have met here, is a priest named Apollinaris, who is professor of grammar at Laodicea. Although his talent is inferior to that of Juvencius, he understands as well as he how important it is to give to the faithful Christian poems. He would substitute in the schools for Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a poem on the principal facts of the Old Testament."

"Nothing will be wanting to the age of Constantine; it will also see the first attempts of Christian poesy. During the first three centuries of bloody persecution which preceded the triumphs of the Church, art and poesy could not be cultivated. The faithful, always threatened by death, dispensed with the ornaments of worship; it was sufficient for them to express, in their religious ceremonies, the symbols of faith. The Catacombs witnessed their *agapes*; their mysterious sacrifices which they did not reveal to the profane; their assemblies which peril did not render less frequent. They dug out, beneath pagan Rome, their temples

at the same time with their tombs. There they held communication with God; there they deposited the precious relics of the martyrs. They had greater need of apologies than of poems. But now that Constantine, become conqueror through the Cross, has yielded to the motion which impels pagan society to the foot of the glorious Cross, the Church reveals her transports. She has poets as well as doctors; and while a new era of eloquence excites the people to the love of God and the neighbor, a new poesy harmoniously expresses the sentiments of piety, gratitude, and adoration which fill all hearts."

"Do not conclude, however, that, previous to the triumph of the Church, poesy was completely ignored in Christian society. Poesy is one of the most perfect means by which man speaks; it is a necessary manifestation of his thoughts, and men so truly religious as the primitive Christians, could not fail to express in melody their acts of faith, hope, and love. Lyricism, in its sublime conceptions, can be defined only as prayer; it is an elevation of the soul to God."

"You speak truly. Prayer initiates the soul into the ineffable delights of communication with God, into the fruitful field of meditation. It gives her the habit of introspection, of self-knowledge, of humble submission to the mysterious veils which, in this life, envelope every creature. The unfathomable depths of Christian dogma give the soul a tendency to reverie, to contemplation, to ecstasy.

Now, does not this constitute the very soul of lyric poetry? It is with souls truly poetic as with those truly religious,—they are ill at ease in the world that surrounds them, they try to fly from it, to take refuge in the ideal world. But the true ideal world is the kingdom of God, whether it be that towards which tend all our aspirations, which we call heaven, or that which the soul opens within herself, according to the words of the Divine Master: ‘The kingdom of God is within you.’”

“In St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians we find the following recommendation, which seems to attest the existence of Christian poetry and music, in the very infancy of the Church: ‘Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual canticles, singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord: *Loquentes vobismetipsis in psalmis et hymnis et canticis spiritualibus.*’

“I think that in those words St. Paul simply recommended the Ephesians to sing the psalms, the poetry of which is at once the most popular and the most sublime. There we find prayers, the cry of the soul,—exclamations which the most illiterate among the faithful, repeat with the enthusiastic fervor of the inspired Psalmist. Ages shall not chill the ardor of those aspirations to God. At the foot of the altar, or in the silence of solitude, the soul, oppressed with sadness, or flooded with joy, shall find no more just or lively expression of her sentiments than a verse of the psalms deeply pondered on. Those phrases—as profound and

varied in sense, it would seem, as the moral situations of those who pronounce them — content piety by giving it a formula, which fully expresses what they experience. It repeats naturally, and as if they, for the first time, burst from her overburdened heart, those sacred accents whose delicious sweetness has been already relished by so many Christian mouths. Many phrases, verses, and fragments of the psalms present themselves involuntarily to our memory, in the diverse circumstances we encounter in the course of life. We have sung those sacred hymns from our very infancy, mingling our voices in the assembly of the faithful, and we can never utterly forget them. The remembrance comes without effort, when our emotion wants words to express itself. Those prayers, those rapturous thoughts, those sighs, which harmonize with all ages, with all souls, must have been most frequently on the lips of the early Christians, to preserve and increase their piety.”

“Remark, however, that St. Paul does not speak of the psalms alone. He also wishes the Christians to sing hymns and spiritual canticles. Popular verses must have been composed at a very early epoch, to express the faith of the Christians in the divinity of the Redeemer. In his letter to the Emperor Trajan, Pliny relates that the Christians were accustomed to assemble before daybreak and sing together verses, in which they proclaimed that Christ is God: *Carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere secum invicem*. We read in the Acts of the Martyrs

that Ignatius of Antioch, who was put to death under Trajan, instituted in the church of which he was pastor, the alternate singing of psalms and hymns in honor of the God-Redeemer. Everybody knows that when Artemon taught that Jesus Christ was only a man, he was combated by a Catholic writer, who alleged against him the faith of the Church, contained in certain hymns composed by the faithful at an epoch not far removed from the cradle of Christianity."

"It is much to be regretted that those spiritual canticles of the early ages have not come down to us."

"Works of piety rather than of art, those poems must have been confided to the memory of the most simple of the faithful, even to those who did not know how to write. They were transmitted by oral teaching, and will be forgotten when hymns of more perfect literary form shall have been composed. There remains at least one canticle of the end of the second century: its author is Clement of Alexandria. It is the most ancient monument of Christian poetry of which I have any knowledge; it is one of the first poetic flowers whose perfume has been exhaled on the altar of Jesus Christ, and its odor is still fresh and sweet."

"I know that hymn, lively and quick, produced by an exaltation of the soul in prayer, which knows all that it owes to Jesus Christ, and would wish worthily to sing of His gifts and benefits. The poetry of Clement of Alexandria has the tone of a

popular chant. It is written naturally and without pretension, to be sung before the altar after the Eucharistic Sacrifice, when the soul lets the gratitude that fills her soul, flow from her lips in broken sighs. The author, concealing his talent, reveals only his faith: he gives no thought to fastidious minds, and seeks not for applause. He does not say, like the pagan poet, elated by his genius, 'I despise the vulgar profane, and banish them from me.' Knowing that the Son of God has condescended to die for men and for slaves, he did not disdain to write for them. Far from repulsing the vulgar, however ignorant they may be, however poor their appreciation of the beauties of poesy, he rather calls them near him, repeating that saying of his Divine Master: 'Suffer the simple, the lowly, the children to come unto Me, that I may teach their innocent mouths to sing holy canticles.'

"The poetry of Juvencius and Apollinaris is more studied, and in it one seeks in vain for the simple and spontaneous lyricism of the earlier epoch. These two authors conform to all classical traditions, but Ephrem, on the contrary, writes by inspiration, under the impulse of rapturous transports, like Clement of Alexandria. He is not bound by the rules laid down by our grammarians."

"Your three Christian poets ought to let us hear some of their beautiful verses."

"They would ask nothing better. If you will accompany me, you may find them at my house. We shall ask each of them to read, and you can then judge of their talent."

"But how shall I understand Ephrem? I don't know a word of Syriac."

"I will translate one of his canticles as well as I can."

Valerian went to his friend's house, but before hearing the three poets he carefully studied their countenances. Apollinaris reminded him of Metrodorus, and wore, like him, the dress of the rhetoricians, but his bald head, wrinkled forehead, and gray beard gave him a venerable aspect. Ephrem and Juvencius appeared to be about the same age. The former, who wore the habit of the solitaries, was emaciated by austerities. His eyes seemed to emit flames, and revealed the fire of inspiration which consumed his heart. The latter, timid and graceful, had a bashful look, and bore his head somewhat inclined to the right.

"Dear Juvencius," said Optatian, "I have promised my friend Valerian that you will not refuse to read for him a fragment of your evangelical history."

"That poem is still very imperfect. I have finished only the prologue, and doubt whether it is worth the trouble of listening to."

"You are too modest. Read the prologue for us."

Juvencius arose, and in a tremulous voice, which became more and more sonorous, he declaimed this invocation :

"This world, in its vast extent, encloses nothing immortal; neither the empire of men, nor Rome the Magnificent, nor the sea, nor the earth, nor the

luminous globes which shine in the heavens. The Creator of all things has fixed the irrevocable moment when torrents of flames shall finally consume the earth. Nevertheless, noble exploits and the credit attached to virtue cause the names of many illustrious men to resound from age to age. Poets lavish on them their praises and increase their renown. Some are rendered celebrated by the songs of the Poet of Smyrna, others owe their glory to the sweet verses of that Virgil of whom Mantua is so proud. The poets themselves enjoy a fame as enduring; they live and seem to be eternal, through the flight of centuries, while around the earth and sea the starry heavens pursue their course with admirable order.

“And since their verses, tissues of falsehood in praise of ancient heroes, have merited to live through succeeding generations, Faith, always certain and true, shall crown my chants throughout ages and ages and shall give merit to my efforts. I will sing the vivifying actions of Christ, the Divine Gift granted to nations, who, from Him, have received the truth. I fear not that the flames which shall consume the world on the last day, will burn this book. It shall, perhaps, itself preserve me from fire when Jesus Christ, the just Judge, Splendor of the Father, Sovereign Lord, shall, all radiant with glory, descend on the fiery cloud. Yes, let us sing! let the sanctifying Spirit assist me and dictate my chant. Sacred Inspiration of which the banks of the Jordan were witness,

possess my soul while I sing, that I may speak worthily of Jesus Christ."

"That is very beautiful!" exclaimed Valerian, when Juvencius had seated himself, wiping away, at the same time, the sweat that bedewed his forehead.

"I acknowledge," said Optatian, "that this beginning seems to me more solemn than Virgil's, 'I sing of the armies and heroes who first, from the borders of Troy ' and so on."

"Do not compare me with the Swan of Mantua," said Juvencius, blushing at his own praises.

"Your style is less elegant, but your thoughts more elevated. In your verses there is no question of Juno pouting with Jupiter or Neptune contradicted by Eolus. We are in presence of the Omnipotent, of the Sovereign Judge of the living and the dead. We no longer invoke the goddess who sang the anger of Achilles, son of Peleus, but the Divine Spirit which inspired the prophets and showed them, through the dim vista of ages, Christ the Redeemer."

"It is only that I may make Jesus Christ better known and loved that I have undertaken this poem. I shall permit myself no fiction in my Gospel History, for I do not wish, in so grave a subject, to mingle human inventions with Divine realities."

"Blessed the poet who loves Christ!" exclaimed Valerian. "Whatever may be the mental gifts which raise him above the common level,

his chants will ever be hymns of adoration and thanksgiving. If he be endowed with great genius, it will be consecrated to the Saviour of men; if he have but one talent, he still will consecrate it to Him who gave it. He remembers that the melodious warbling of the bird, praises the Creator as well as the sublime crashing of thunder, and that the humble lyre is as favorably heard as the heptachord, when it glorifies the Saviour's name."

"We have heard the first Christian accents of Latin poesy," said Optatian; "let us now hear the Greek. Its harmony will charm our ears, while its piety touches our hearts."

"I must crave your kind indulgence," said Apollinaris, "while I read for you some verses I have lately composed. My theme is a well-known trait in the life of the blessed John the Evangelist. But expect not from me either the elegance or softness of the old man of Teos."

"Disciple of a God crowned with thorns, the Christian must not crown himself with roses. He should have as great a horror for softness of language as for softness of soul. One should speak of the Seer of Patmos with unaffected simplicity."

Apollinaris delivered the following stanzas, not with the habitual pomposity of the rhetoricians, but with a perfect taste which concealed its defects:

Near unto Ephesus, city so famous,

Whose temple immortal throughout Greece is known,

Wherein the false goddess, Diana the huntress,

Sees her golden altars still standing alone.

In a cool, pleasant valley, embosomed in verdure,
O'er whose flowery fields falls the last sunset ray;
At the foot of a sycamore tree is reclining
The disciple who once on his Lord's bosom lay.

Ever to heaven his rapt glances turning,
Reveal that his thoughts above earthly things rise;
'T would seem as if angels are opening above him
The Vision of Glory to his longing eyes.

O'er his saintly features hath Time traced deep furrows,—
Those furrows are deepened by sorrow and tears;
See crowning his forehead a few threads of silver,—
He bows 'neath the weight of a hundred years.

The last of the twelve blest co-workers with Jesus,
But dearest of all to his Lord's Sacred Heart;
"Disciple Beloved!" The glorious title
Transpiercing his soul with love's rapturous dart!

'T is John the Apostle, the Chosen of Calvary,
Whereon to his care was entrusted our Mother;
And oft on his lips are the words low and tender:
"My children, my little ones, love one another!"

Around him are seated fair youths and bright children,
The faithful in groups most attentively hear;—
Their eyes fill with tears as they catch the sweet accents
That fall from the lips of the Saint and the Seer.

In words love-inspired, in raptures prophetic,
He tells how the glorious Vision of God
Shall burst on the sight of the purified spirit,
Who, through life, the path traced by Jesus hath trod.

He tells of the triumph of those who have suffered
And died for the faith of our Jesus, our Brother;
Yet, often his theme interrupting, he murmurs:
"My children, my little ones, love one another!"

And e'en as he speaks to his neophytes fervent,
There hovers above him a beautiful dove ;
Its mates follow quickly, they circle around him,
And by mute caresses, prove they, too, can love.

Fearless they hide in the folds of his garments,
Flutter around him, depart and return ;
Seem they to say that his day's task is ended,
His flock has been fed, let the doves have their turn.

Smiling, he kisses the innocent pleaders,
They peck at his lips to return the embrace ;
As on them he gazes, the tears rush unbidden,—
His thoughts leap the chasm of distance and space.

Enraptured, he once more beholds by the Jordan,
The Spirit of God, the Adorable Dove,
Descending on Jesus, while the voice of the Father,
Proclaiming His Godhead, is heard from above.

But a pagan, who stands 'mid the crowd of believers,
Rebuking the saint, asks, "How is it that you,
Who are teacher of nations, indulge in such folly,
And thus, for amusement, those birds to you woo?"

"When the day's chase is ended," St. John mildly answers,
"Does the archer his bow retain bent thro' the night?
He the tension relaxes, that its powers preserving,
It may speed home the arrows in swift and sure flight.

"So man's spirit, created to know God and love Him,
Attains to that knowledge by reason and prayer ;
Yet the mind, howe'er solid, needs some relaxation,
That it may after labor its spent powers repair."

He ceases ; the darkness fast gathers around them,
And the Christians the love-feast have gone to prepare :
One kiss of adieu, and the doves, too, departing,
Are soon lost to sight in the dim, misty air.

When Apollinaris had concluded, his auditors still seemed to hear him, so deeply were they moved by his simple and flowing verses.

"You have revealed to me," said Juvencius, "a source of Christian poetry of which I had never dreamed,—the lives of the saints. We should sing of them with more love than the pagans sang of their conquerors and heroes. They have been on earth our models; they are in heaven our protectors.

"The heroes whom the pagan lyre celebrates, seem very petty when compared with the moral grandeur of our apostles, pontiffs, and martyrs. Far from being like those conquerors, the destroyers of nations, the saints have been only their benefactors. They caused no waves of blood, no torrents of tears. They disarmed anger, alleviated suffering, and consoled misfortune."

"Now that Western poesy has spoken," said Apollinaris, "I hope that Optatian will give us a specimen of that of the East, by translating for us one of Ephrem's Canticles."

"The lyrical effusions of the Syrian poet," said Optatian, "have not the metre, order, or regularity which characterize the genius of the West. Its poems are of two kinds. Some are composed of equal verses of seven syllables, like the heroic verses of the Greeks. This the Syrians call *mimro*, that is to say, discourse, homily, sermon. Others are arranged in a certain number of strophes, like the Latin odes. The Syrians call this class of

hymns *madruscio*, that is, canticle, ode, meditation. No translation can render the brilliancy and rapidity of these verses, which give, as it were, wings of fire to the improvisations of Ephrem. But, thanks to the fire of his inspiration and the ardor of his native land, his poetry is so warmly colored that, even in passing through another idiom, it loses not entirely its primitive tints.

“Some of Ephrem’s hymns would doubtless seem strange to you, so full are they of bold imagery, of enumerations, exclamations, antitheses, and repetitions. He seems unable to moderate the fire of his words and restrain their impetuosity. I shall choose among those canticles in which the inspiration is somewhat regulated by art and taste. Transformed sometimes into recitals, and more frequently into dialogues, they take a dramatic turn rarely employed among the Greeks and the Latins. The Western ode might borrow from Ephrem some happy forms of composition, which would render it less monotonous. Listen to this canticle on the Adoration of the Magi. No ode of Pindar’s is more sublime. It is true that the subject is more inspiring than a victory won at the Isthmian games:—

“‘At the birth of the Son light burst o’er the world, and, darkness fleeing before it, it illumined the universe. Let the universe then glorify the Son who has enlightened it!

“‘From a Virgin’s womb He came forth: before His presence shadows flee away; He dissipates the

darkness of error, and the world beholds the true light. Let the world then glorify Him!

“His renown is revealed among nations, and a light has arisen in darkness; and nations exult with joy to render glory to Him whose birth has illumined them.

“His light He has sent even to the East, and Persia has been enlightened by the refulgence of a star. He called it forth, and it announced to Persia that all should hasten towards a rejoicing victim.

“A flaming torch announces Him in the midst of darkness, and invites all nations to possess that brilliant light which has descended upon the earth.

“Heaven has sent a star as messenger to bid the Persians to come before their King and adore Him.

“It called the Magi, already moved by the prophetic presentiments of Assyria, and it said to them: “Take presents; hasten to adore the great King who is born in Judea.”

“Those Persian princes, full of joy, prepared presents in their country, and brought to the Son of the Virgin — gold, myrrh, and incense.

“When, on arriving, they found the child, still silent, cradled in the house of a poor woman, they prostrated themselves: full of joy, they adored Him, and offered Him their treasures.

“Mary said to them: “Why have you done this? Why have you left your own country to come with your treasures to the child?”

“They answered: “Your Son is king, on whose head are united all diadems, because He is king

over all, and His kingdom is above the world, and His empire all obey."

"*The Virgin.* "When did it ever happen that a poor woman gave birth to a king? I am indigent and destitute of all things: how could I have brought forth a king?"

"*The Magi.* "'Tis you alone who have brought forth the great king, and through you shall the truth be glorified, and diadems shall be humbled before your Son."

"*The Virgin.* "I myself have not the treasures of kings, and wealth is never mine. Look at my house: it is poor, and my dwelling is empty. Why, then, do you salute my Son as king?"

"*The Magi.* "Your Son is a great treasure, and wealth capable of enriching the world; for the treasures of kings flee away, but thine is inexhaustible and immeasurable."

"*The Virgin.* "May not the king who is born to you be some other? Search diligently; for here there is only the Son of a poor woman, to whom it has never been given even to see a king."

"*The Magi.* "Can the light, then, err in its course when it is sent? If we have not been called and led by darkness, but by light, then, again, your Son is king."

"*The Virgin.* "But you see Him: He is a little child who speaks not, whose mother's house is lowly and unfurnished: here is no sign of royalty. How, then, can a dweller in such a house be a king?"

"*The Magi.* "Yes, most certainly we behold a

peaceful and silent child, but He is king, though as poor as you have said. We see Him, by His command, causing the stars of heaven to proclaim His advent."

"*The Virgin.* "The child is little, and you can plainly see He has neither diadem nor throne. What, then, do you see in Him thus to honor Him with royal gifts?"

"*The Magi.* "He is little because He wills it, because He loves gentleness and humility, while He waits the time to reveal Himself; but a time shall come when diadems shall bend before Him and adore Him."

"*The Virgin.* "My Son has neither armies nor legions nor cohorts; He lies there in the poverty of His mother, and yet you call Him king!"

"*The Magi.* "Your Son's armies are on high; His horsemen patrol the heavens as fiery stars, and one of them was sent to call us; His appearance filled our country with dread."

"*The Virgin.* "My Son is but a child, and how can He act as if He were king when He is even ignored by the world? How could a child govern the powerful and illustrious?"

"*The Magi.* "Your child, O lady, is an old man, the Ancient of Days, the first Cause; Adam himself is younger than He, and by Him shall the universe be renovated."

"*The Virgin.* "You must, then, explain to me the whole mystery; tell me who in your country revealed to you that my Son is king."

“*The Magi.* “A wondrous star appeared to us, outshining in splendor all other stars; by its light illumining our whole country, and it announced to us the birth of a king.”

“*The Virgin.* “Ah! I implore you, speak not of that here, lest the kings of the earth learning it, concert, in their envy, evil measures against the child.”

“*The Magi.* “Fear not, lady, because your Son shall crush and annihilate all diadems, and all their envy shall be powerless for His destruction.”

“*The Virgin.* “I fear Herod, that impure wolf; I fear lest he persecute me, and draw his sword to cut down this sweet sprout before its maturity.”

“*The Magi.* “Fear not Herod, for your Son shall overturn his throne, and scarcely shall this Prince be reigning ere he shall be destroyed and his diadem shall fall.”

“*The Virgin.* “I acknowledge to you that an angel, appearing to me when I conceived the Child, revealed to me as well as you, that my Son is king, that His diadem comes from on high and nothing shall crush it.”

“*The Magi.* “Ah, well! the same angel who spoke to you is he who, appearing to us under the form of a star, announced the coming of a child more resplendent than all the stars.”

“*The Virgin.* “That angel revealed to me in the Annunciation that of His reign there shall be no end. And this is a secret that is to be carefully guarded.”

“*The Magi.* “And to us also the star revealed that your Son is King of kings and Lord of lords. It is evident an angel had assumed that form that we might not know him.”

“*The Virgin.* “The angel who, to me appeared, called Him Lord before He was conceived, and announced Him to me as the Son of the Most High. Where is His Father? No one knows.”

“*The Magi.* “In our land he, under the form of a star, announced that the Lord of heaven is born: thy Son commands the luminaries of heaven, for they rise but at His will.”

“*The Virgin.* “Listen. I am about to reveal to you another secret that may confirm you in the faith; it is that I, remaining still a virgin, conceived this Son who is the Son of God. Go forth and preach it.”

“*The Magi.* “Already through the star have we understood that His birth is above the order of nature, and that your Son is above all, since He is the Son of God.”

“*The Virgin.* “The height of the heavens, the depths of the abyss, all angels, and all luminaries attest that He is the Son of God and the Lord. Reveal the glad tidings in your land.”

“*The Magi.* “The height of the heavens, speaking by the voice of a single star, have moved the earth, and given her the assurance that your Son is the Son of God, and that all nations shall be subject to Him.”

“*The Virgin.* “Carry back peace to your country;

let peace be spread throughout your lands. Veracious messengers of truth, be held for such throughout your voyage."

"*The Magi.* "May the peace of thy Son as it has led us hither, lead us back safely to our own land; and when His empire shall be manifested to the world, may it visit our country and bless it."

"*The Virgin.* "Let Persia rejoice at the glad tidings. Let Assyria leap for joy at your return, and when the reign of my Son shall be manifested, His standard shall be erected in your land."

"*The Magi.* "And thou, mayst thou be glorified by the Church in His triumphs, because of thee the Child is born, who is the Son of the Most High, and He has illumined the highest heavens and the depths of the abyss. Blessed be He who by His birth hath given joy to the world!"

All were struck by the originality of this canticle, at once so simple yet so sublime, a dialogue like an Eclogue of Virgil.

"What most surprises me," said Juvencius, "is not the elevation of the thoughts, the art of the composition, or the variety of the style, but the boldness with which Ephrem relates a fact in our Saviour's life, not as it happened in reality, but as it might have happened."

"In your poem, my dear Juvencius," responded Optatian, "you are content to translate the Gospel into verse. Ephrem comments on it with his genius and his heart."

"I confess I should like to withdraw the recital

of the sacred life of Jesus Christ from that power of daring all, which Horace grants to painters and to poets."

"When one is as pious as Ephrem, he dares much only to edify much."

When Optatian accompanied Valerian home, he asked him:

"Which of my three poets do you prefer?"

"I think that Ephrem is the most wonderfully gifted."

"That solitary genius who lives far from Greco-Roman civilization, enamored of the silence and majesty of the desert, is like the rock which opened under the rod of Moses to quench the people's thirst. His soul is a living source whence burst forth inexhaustible floods of eloquence and poetry. Uniting the active life with the contemplative, he interrupts his meditations to preach and to sing. With irresistible force he speaks sometimes the language of reason, sometimes the language of love, often both together. He improvises here and there, as the occasion presents itself, moving sermons or sublime canticles. In him there is nothing studied. His words are only the impetuous effusions of a soul which feels the necessity of pouring itself out."

"Has he attended no literary school?"

"He has had no other master than the Bible. He was born in Nisibis, in the reign of Diocletian. His parents were but simple laborers, yet they had acquired great merit before God in confessing

generously the name of Jesus Christ during the persecution. They consecrated to the Lord the child He had given them. A short time after his birth they had a vision, in which they saw issuing from the mouth of their child, a vine loaded with grapes. Its branches spread far and wide, and the birds of the air came to feed on its fruit, which, nevertheless, was not diminished. The pious parents understood that the Lord reserved for their child graces of predilection, and they called him Ephrem, or Ephraïm, a name signifying abundant in fruits.

“Ephrem received baptism at the age of eighteen years, from which time he entered on a new course of life. In his humility he regarded as frightful crimes some slight faults committed in his early childhood, and although they had been effaced in baptism, he continued incessantly to implore pardon of God. He accused himself of having assisted at the public games and shows of the amphitheatre, of having doubted in Divine Providence, and, above all, of having caused the death of a poor man's cow by throwing stones at her and driving her into the mountains. He will deplore these faults throughout his life, and will never cease, because of them, to regard himself as the worst of sinners.

“Desirous of living for God alone, he retired into a solitude under the conduct of blessed Julian; but his piety soon became famous and they sought to draw him out of the desert to confide to him the episcopal charge. To avoid this danger he coun-

terfeited the madman. His humility, however, did not prevent him from instructing the people of the surrounding country on those things necessary to salvation, and the cities of Edessa and Nisibis have been renewed in fervor through his sermons. You can form no idea of the power of his eloquence. Sometimes pathetic, sometimes terrible, he has the gift of tears, and he is often interrupted by the sobs of his auditors. They tremble at his voice, as if thunderbolts were suspended over their heads; as if they were about to hear the trumpet of the last judgment."

"How beautiful would poesy be," said Valerian, "were the lyre, so often profaned by impure hands, to be touched only by saints."

When alone he added:

"Had Thalia but heard the poems of Juvencius, Apollinaris, and Ephrem, she would, perhaps, recognize that their effusions, inspired by faith, are more moving and more sublime than the gross rhapsodies of Arius."





CHAPTER XII.

THE NICENE CREED.

WHEN the invited bishops had arrived at Nice, they assembled in the church and held several special meetings, while awaiting the solemn session which was to be held in the Emperor's palace, and at which he himself was to assist. Constantine, who was at Nicomedia when the assembled bishops began their deliberations, rejoiced at their number and their zeal for the peace of the Church, and informed them that he was preparing to meet them and fix the day on which they should solemnly pronounce their decisions in his presence. The bishops ardently desired to see with their own eyes that un hoped-for prodigy, which Tertullian had believed impossible, and which alone proved to him the superhuman power of Christianity :—the master of the world bowing before the Cross ; the successor of Diocletian protecting the Church !

The Patriarch of Alexandria having refused to preside over an assembly convened to examine a heresy first propagated in his diocese, the honor devolved upon Eustathius, Patriarch of Antioch. At his side sat the legates of the Sovereign Pontiff. The bishops of the Arian faction ranged

themselves beside one another, the more easily to consult on their responses.

The three hundred Catholic bishops did not suffer themselves to be led into theological speculations foreign to the object of their meeting, but in view of a heresy contrary to the doctrine revealed by Jesus Christ, touching the Trinity of Persons and the Incarnation of the Word, they applied themselves to the drawing up of a formula which might, in few words, contain the condemnation of Arianism, and a clear and precise *résumé* of the teachings of the Fathers of the Church during the first three centuries. As the Arians pretended that the Son had not always existed, but had been drawn from nonentity before all other creatures, the patriarch of Alexandria proposed to declare simply that the Son is God. His words were received with loud applause.

"It is the faith of Peter!"

"It is the doctrine the Church received from the apostles!"

"Anathema to him who does not believe what the Church has always taught!"

"My brother of Nicomedia," said Eustathius, addressing Eusebius, "do you approve that the Council, assisted by the Holy Spirit, declare that the Son is God?"

"Before deciding, I would wish, with the permission of your fraternity, to consult those whose wise counsels I ordinarily like to follow."

"Every liberty is accorded you."

The Arians formed a circle at the extremity of the church, and consulted together, in a low voice, on the acceptation of the formula proposed by the patriarch of Alexandria.

"Nothing prevents us from affirming that the Son is God," said Arius. "We read in the Scripture: 'Thou art God and the Son of the Most High.' Since men are called gods in our holy books, we may give the same title to the most perfect of all creatures."

When the Arians resumed their seats, Eusebius spoke:

"We are happy to be able to declare, with our venerable brethren, that the Son is God."

There was one prolonged exclamation of joy, for the greater number of the bishops thought they had at last come to an agreement. Athanasius, who knew the real thoughts of Arius, arose and said a few words to the legates of the Sovereign Pontiff.

"My brethren, will you allow me to propose a question to those who have consulted together before uniting in our profession of faith?" asked Osius.

"Most certainly," answered the patriarch of Alexandria.

"Arius, do you, with us, affirm that the Son and the Father have the same nature and the same Divinity?"

"I am ready to swear that the Son is God, since it is written, I have said you are gods."

On hearing this explanation, the bishops could not restrain their indignation.

"That is not serious: that is a play upon words."

"In this sense, Arius might call every virtuous man God."

"Out of here with the Egyptian!"

"Impose silence on the heretic!"

Leontius of Cæsarea arose:

"To make an end of these equivocations, we must declare that the Word is truly the power of God; that He is perfectly like the Father in everything — immutable, eternal, infinite; that He is inseparable from the Father; and that, nevertheless, He has an existence proper to Himself. . . ."

It would seem that expressions so positive could not be taken in any but an orthodox sense, yet the Arians still found a way of interpreting them to suit themselves. They displayed that cavilling subtlety, those perfidious artifices, that spirit of quibbling and disputation which characterized the Greek sophists, and which, from them, has been transmitted to all heretics. When they again consulted, Eusebius thus expressed himself in their name:

"We affirm of the Son of God all that has been exposed by our venerable brother of Cæsarea. Does not St. Paul say that man is the image and the glory of God? We admit, then, that the Son, who is more perfect than man, is more like to God than he. St. Paul says, also, that we live eternally, consequently, we can recognize that the Son is eternal. We acknowledge, also, that the Son is

in God, since we ourselves live in God, we move in Him, we are in Him. What is more, we consent to say that the Son is immutable, since, according to Scripture, nothing shall separate us from the love of God."

The Arians then accepted all the expressions of the Catholics, but with such mental restrictions as changed the sense of them for the initiated. When the bishops remarked the hypocrisy of the Arians, they sought to express, by some decisive word, what they understood by the Biblical expressions they employed.

Athanasius had as yet said nothing, but the patriarch of Alexandria having commanded him to speak, the elegance and lucidity of his delivery charmed the whole assembly. He recounted briefly the origin of the new heresy; explained how directly it was opposed to the teaching of the Church, touching the redemption of the human race by the Incarnation of the Word, and showed how the Arians condemned themselves by the care they took to dissimulate their errors. He exhorted the assembly to define the doctrine of the Church by a word so precise that it should be impossible for the Arians to interpret it in their own fashion, and, for this end, proposed to declare that the Son is *consubstantial to the Father*.

"This word," said he, "expresses that affirmation most opposed to the negation of the Arians. It signifies not only that the Son is like the Father, but that He has the same divinity as the Father.

You cannot more forcibly affirm that the Son is engendered from all eternity; that His divine generation differs infinitely from that which belongs to the human nature; that, not only does He resemble the Father, but that His substance cannot be separated from the substance of the Father; that He and the Father are but one, since Jesus Christ has said most expressly: 'I and the Father are one.'"

When Athanasius had ended his discourse there was a simultaneous burst of admiration.

"The Holy Ghost speaks by the mouth of Athanasius!"

"Athanasius is a second Paul!"

"We adore the Son because He is consubstantial to the Father."

The Arians tried to drown those plaudits by impotent recriminations.

"Athanasius is another Sabellius!"

"His doctrine outrages the divinity!"

"Let him be exiled!"

That simple formula, "the Father and the Son are consubstantial," that is to say, the substance of the Son is the same as the substance of the Father, condemned Arianism with such precision that equivocations and subterfuges became impossible. Arius declared to the bishops of his party that he would rather die than subscribe to that formula.

When calm was restored, Eusebius, of Nicomedia, arose.

"I protest against the word consubstantial, because we do not find it in Holy Scripture."

"That objection can have no weight," said Leon-tius, of Cæsarea. "What matters it that the words are new since they express an ancient doctrine? Do we not always speak of the Trinity, the Holy Eucharist, of dioceses, of parishes? And yet we do not find these words in the Holy Scripture."

"In revealing His doctrine," added Marcellus of Ancyra, "Jesus Christ did not teach His apostles a complete theological language. To expose to the faithful the truths which the apostles have transmitted to us, we are obliged to give numerous explanations, and to employ, in a new sense, a host of terms of ordinary language. When the first heresies arose, our predecessors were compelled to have recourse to new expressions to trace more exactly the limits separating error from truth. New words were coined to express new ideas. Was not Tertullian the first who employed the word *Trinity*, to express clearly the mystery of three distinct persons in the unity of the Divine nature? The words adopted to express the mysteries of the Divine life are, doubtless, most imperfect. Never could human tongue speak of God as clearly as it speaks of objects which our intelligence can embrace. But as we can convey an idea only by employing words, we are obliged, in exposing revealed doctrine, to draw from ordinary language those expressions which to us seem more suitable than others to explain the dogma. It is of faith that the Father and the Son are but one and the same God. To teach this truth, what

more natural than to adopt a word clear and precise, and to say: The Son is consubstantial to the Father."

The Arians continued to complain of the novelty of the term proposed. They were less numerous, but speaking, as they did, all together, they made more noise than the majority. Eusebius of Nicomedia demanded, that instead of the word "consubstantial," they should adopt the phrase, "like in substance."

"Would you accept that expression?" asked Athanasius.

"Most willingly," responded the Arians.

"And yet, we do not find it in the Holy Scripture. Consequently, if you reject the word consubstantial, it is less because it is new than because it condemns you."

Arius wished to continue the dispute, but the assembly were fatigued.

"Is it the will of the Council that the word 'consubstantial' be inserted in the creed?" asked the patriarch of Antioch.

"Yes! yes!" responded nearly all the bishops.

"No! no!" cried the Arians.

"Take the votes!"

"The question has been sufficiently debated," said the patriarch; "we shall now take the votes. Let all who are not bishops withdraw to the extremity of the church."

Just as they were about beginning to take the opinions of the bishops, a voice was heard:

"Secundus and Theonas ought not to vote; they have been excommunicated by the Synod of Alexandria."

"The Council of Nice has been convoked expressly to judge, to reform the decisions of the Synod of Alexandria," responded the Arians.

The patriarch of Antioch consulted Osius, and it was decided that, for that time, they should depart from the ordinary rules, and allow all liberty to the Arians, thus to avoid giving them any pretext for complaint.

The votes were taken; nearly three hundred bishops demanded that the word consubstantial should be inserted in the Creed, only fifteen rejected it. Eusebius of Nicomedia was thunder-struck on seeing how few had decided to range themselves on his side.

Once agreed upon the word consubstantial, the Fathers of the Council charged Osius and some other bishops to draw up a profession of faith, touching the Trinity of Divine Persons and the Incarnation of the Word.

Meantime, the day approached on which the bishops were to meet in solemn assembly in the imperial palace, to discuss, in Constantine's presence, those doctrinal points misrepresented by the Arians. After having celebrated at Nicomedia the anniversary of the victory won two years previously over Licinius, the Emperor proceeded to Nice. On the day appointed for the solemn session, the bishops repaired to the palace, where the largest hall had

been prepared for their reception. Each bishop occupied the place assigned him, then all awaited in religious silence the Emperor's arrival. Preceded only by those of his ministers who were Christians, Constantine entered the hall without escort or armed attendants. Valerian was so fortunate as to be of the small number of officers and court-dignitaries who formed the Emperor's *cortège*.

When the sound of trumpets announced Constantine's arrival, the bishops rose to do him honor. He entered, robed in purple, and covered with gold and diamonds. Softening, as far as he could, his imperial majesty, he passed through the midst of the bishops, with grave and modest demeanor and downcast eyes. On arriving at the extremity of the hall, he remained standing until the bishops had resumed their seats. He refused the throne that had been prepared for him, and contented himself with a little golden seat, as a mark that he considered himself as a sheep in the midst of his pastors, as the eldest son of the Church in the midst of the General Assembly of its Fathers. The bishops who remembered Galerius and Diocletian, admired that Emperor, sole master of the East and the West, who believed he fulfilled a duty and honored his supreme power by bending, not only before the Divine majesty of Jesus Christ, but even before the dignity of His ministers.

The Emperor and bishops being seated, Eustathius, patriarch of Antioch, the first on the right side, opened the session, and pronounced the following allocution :

“Most mighty Emperor, eternal thanksgiving be rendered to God, in whose hand are sceptres and crowns! We bless Him for having chosen you to overthrow the error of idolatry and proclaim the liberty of Christian worship. The horrible vapor of demoniacal sacrifices is dissipated; the superstitions of polytheism are banished; the darkness of impiety has given place to the brightness of Divine wisdom which illumines the world. The Father is glorified, the Son adored, the Holy Spirit announced. The consubstantial Trinity, the Divine Unity in three persons, is everywhere adored. It is through it, O august Emperor, that your reign is glorious; maintain, then, inviolably the faith in the Trinity. Whoever lays an heretical hand on this fundamental dogma overturns the whole economy of the Christian religion. Arius, by his impious propagandism, has rendered necessary this, so numerous an assembly of bishops. He has broken with the teaching of the prophets and apostles, and blushes not to strip the Word, the only Son of the Father, of his Divine nature. By a new kind of idolatry, he degrades the Creator to the level of the creature. To you it belongs, august Emperor, to lead him to change his sentiments and respect apostolic doctrine. But should he, unfortunately, continue obstinate in his impious errors, you will sanction the sentence which separates him from Christ and us, and puts an end to the seductions he has, only too long, exercised on the unwary faithful.”

This allocution indicated very clearly what was the office of the Council, and what that of the Emperor. The bishops, judges of the faith, could alone define Christian dogma, and declare that Arius's tenets were contrary to revealed doctrine. On this point, the Emperor, having no deliberative voice, could not interfere. He was of the Church taught, not of the Church teaching. But the bishops, after having pronounced on the question of doctrine, could exercise no coercive power on him who divided religious society by the propagation of heresy. The head of the State, alone, could decide what measures should be taken to end the trouble; it was his to consider if its author merited chastisement and how he should be punished; it was his, in fine, to sanction, if he judged proper, by an external penalty, the sentence of excommunication fulminated by the bishops against Arius and his adherents.

When Eustathius had concluded, Constantine arose to address the august assembly. Amidst a profound silence, all the bishops turned their eyes on him, deeply moved by the solemnity of that great day, unique in the history of the Church, when the Emperor, assisting for the first time at a Council, employed his authority to assure to the judges of the faith liberty in their deliberations, infringing not on their rights, and submitting to all their doctrinal decisions. With sweet and serene majesty, Constantine glanced around on those venerable prelates assembled in such numbers, and from

every land, to correspond to his desires for religious pacification. After a few moments' recollection, he spoke, but as a Christian rather than a sovereign, in the tone of piety rather than of command. He expressed himself most fluently in Greek, yet nevertheless he spoke in Latin, although the Oriental bishops who understood only Greek, were more numerous than the Western bishops, to whom Latin was familiar. Doubtless, he thought that Latin being the language of the conquerors of the world, the successor of Augustus ought to speak first in Latin to persons drawn from all parts of the empire; or, it may be that he wished to recognize the primacy of the Roman Church and the Sovereign Pontiff, represented by his legates at the Council of Nice.

"Dearly beloved Fathers," said Constantine, "my most ardent wish has been to enjoy the benefit of your presence. I render thanks to the King of kings that, in addition to the innumerable favors He has lavished on me, it has been given me to see you all united in the spirit of peace and concord. As to the future, no enemy shall trouble the course of our prosperity. With the aid of Christ the Redeemer, it has been given me to crush the tyrants who had declared war against God. Will the demon, under some other form, continue to outrage our holy religion? An intestine division in the body of the Church would, to me, seem more dangerous than an armed struggle. Yes, I declare it; the revolt of foreign nations would not afflict me as much

as such fatal divisions; and at the first news of the schism, I comprehended its full importance. To put an end thereto, I have called you all hither, and the sight of so grand an assembly fills me with consolation. My joy would be complete could I but see all hearts and minds united in thought and sentiments of the same faith. Yours it is, O pontiffs consecrated to God, to proclaim the true doctrine, and, by means of persuasion, to lead others to accept it. Use, then, all your efforts, ministers dear to God, devoted servants of our common Lord and Saviour; work together to reëstablish peace, to reunite the bonds of concord, to do away with all subjects of division. Thus shall you have merit before God our Father, and before me, who have the honor to serve Him."

Those noble words were sincere. Constantine really desired that peace of minds through the unity of religious beliefs; but he felt it did not belong to him to compel, by his authority, the acceptance of a dogma. He hoped that when three hundred bishops had pronounced against the opinions of Arius, their decision would be universally accepted, and that the opposite party, so few in number, would consent to reunite with the majority. He knew not the obstinacy of heresy, and the stubborn pride of sectaries, incapable of avowing that they have been deceived.

The controverted points were again debated in the Emperor's presence. Arius was given every liberty to expose his opinions, and profited so well

of it that the bishops closed their ears on hearing his horrible blasphemies delivered with unheard-of audacity, nor was Constantine less shocked than they. Athanasius, Osius, Marcellus of Ancyra, and Leontius of Cæsarea had no difficulty in proving that the system of Arius was the product of his imagination, and directly opposed to the words of the Church, to the doctrine of the apostles, and the teaching of the Fathers of the first three centuries. To lessen the effect of the foolhardy exposition of Arius, his partisans presented to the Council a profession of faith, in which their errors regarding the Son of God were disguised by artful expressions; but they could not deceive the Fathers of the Council. Hence, when their profession of faith had been read, it was indignantly torn in pieces, and the bishops declared it denied the doctrine always held by the Catholic Church and revealed to her by her Divine Founder. They accused the authors of that equivocal profession of faith of having fraudulently betrayed the truth.

It was impossible for the Arians to agree on another exposition of doctrine more conformable to orthodoxy, for on them fell the inevitable lot of heretics: they divided among themselves and formed several sects. Error can never maintain itself in that unity ever the self-same, ever immutable; it gravitates around the truth like an obscure planet around a luminous star. It continually changes its aspect and position, yet meets not in its progress through the void a limit to its erratic

course. When man refuses to be taught by God Himself on mysteries known to God alone; when he wishes to become his own master, he vainly tries to attach himself to an immutable doctrine. He passes, in spite of himself, from one system to another. He renounces a theory which appears to him luminous, as soon as he thinks he finds in another, a light yet more brilliant.

The divers points of controversy having been discussed in the Emperor's presence, Hermogenes read slowly and solemnly the following profession of faith, drawn up by Osius :

"We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten by the Father before all ages, God of God; Light of light; true God of true God; begotten, not created; consubstantial to the Father, by whom all things were made. Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven and became incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. Who suffered for us, rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven, from whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead. We believe also in the Holy Ghost. As to those who say: There was a time when the Son of God did not exist; that He has been drawn forth from nothing; or who pretend that the Son of God is of a nature different from that of the Father; that He is mutable and subject to change like a creature;—the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church says, Let them be anathema."

No human words could be more widely reëchoed than has been this Nicene Creed. Applauded by the bishops of the first Ecumenical Council and the first Christian Emperor, it has become the most solemn profession of faith throughout the Catholic Church, both in the East and in the West. It became part of the Liturgy; it is repeated from one end of the world to the other by every priest who offers the Eucharistic Sacrifice. It is sung by all nations of the earth, whenever they assemble to sanctify the Lord's day by the solemn celebration of the Holy Mysteries. It resounds in the lofty vaults of cathedrals whose spires pierce the heavens; it expresses the faith and hope of the poor in the thatched-covered temple of the humblest village. Savages, scarcely converted, as well as the oldest nations civilized by Christianity; the fishermen of our coasts and the herdsmen of our mountains, as well as the brilliant auditory which sacred eloquence draws to the most famous pulpits; all those who think of God; all those who adore Him; all the children of the Catholic Church, repeat, with the emotion of gratitude and the recollection of prayer, inclining the head and bending the knee, the words adopted by the Council of Nice as an epitome of the teachings of three centuries regarding the redemption of the human race:—

“I believe in Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, consubstantial to the Father, by whom all things were made; who, for us men, and for our salvation, descended from heaven, became incarnate by the

operation of the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man."

All the Catholic prelates assembled at Nice, declared that the profession of faith written by Osius expressed the true doctrine of the Church. By unanimous consent, they solemnly asserted the obligation of subscribing to this formula, which they all accepted, and which, from thence, received the name of the Nicene Creed. Arius refused to subscribe, and his obstinacy was at first imitated by seventeen bishops. They wished to renew the discussion; but the resistance made by so feeble a minority against the unanimous consent of three hundred bishops, irritated the Emperor, who declared that not only was he disposed to receive with respect the decision of the Council, but that he was firmly determined to exile all who should be so bold as to reject it. Constantine's threats made deeper impression on Arius's adherents than the arguments of Athanasius and Marcellus of Ancyra. Eusebius of Cæsarea, unwilling to fall into disgrace with the Emperor, hastened to subscribe, and his example was followed by Eusebius of Nicomedia, and the greater number of the Arians, that they might not be ignominiously banished in presence of the assembled bishops. But their subscription was not sincere, and they were resolved to renew the discussion as soon as they could do so with impunity. Theonas and Secundus, who, like Arius, were Lybians, protested their attachment to the person and doctrines of the heresiarch. No threats

could alter their decision, and they were banished to Illyria. Arius, the prime cause of the troubles that agitated the Church, could not be treated less severely than his accomplices. He was anathematized by the Council, and, to the penalty of excommunication, Constantine added that of exile. All his writings, *Thalia* with the rest, were condemned to the flames. The Emperor published against Arius, the following decree :

“Constantine, Most Mighty Augustus, to the Bishops and People : Arius, having imitated the criminal audacity of the sacrilegious and the impious, has merited to share their punishment and infamy. Consequently, we ordain that, for the future, all his writings be committed to the flames ; that not only may his impious doctrines be extirpated, but there may remain of them not even a trace to make them known to posterity. Whoever shall be convicted of having received any of his works, and not conformed to this our present edict, shall be punished with death.”

At a time when disobedience to an imperial edict was sufficient to expose any one to sentence of death, this capital punishment pronounced against those who, in contempt of Constantine's command, should preserve a copy of Arius's works, was conformable to the jurisprudence of that epoch. For the rest, this punishment was never carried out. The possessors of the condemned writings hastened to deliver them up to the flames, and the few of his partisans who dared to preserve them, carefully concealed them from sight. This sufficiently explains

why no manuscript of *Thalia* has come down to us. True, it is no great literary loss, but this bizarre work would have aided us in giving a faithful portraiture of Arianism on its first appearance.

Did Constantine abuse his power by consigning those writings to the flames? It is evident that the first Christian Emperor, whose government was controlled neither by parliaments nor legislative assemblies, by journals nor universal suffrage, could not have had the same opinion of the liberty of the press as the constitutional sovereigns of the nineteenth century. Persuaded that Arius's works were the fatal causes of discord and dissension, he could not tolerate them without failing in his duty as absolute sovereign. In banishing the heresiarch and his stubborn partisans, he did not act contrary to the principles expressed in his edict of religious liberty. Two forms of worship only were then recognized by the State—paganism and Christianity—and as the Emperor would have banished any one who should have raised troubles among the pagans, so he exiled those who divided Christian society. Even now, under the *régime* of liberty of worship, if some priests and bishops,—as formerly Arius and Eusebius of Nicomedia,—should propagate heretical doctrines, if they should wish to remain in the Church in spite of the Church, and enjoy all the temporal advantages granted by the State to the ministers of a recognized religion, the sovereign would consider them, in spite of their pretensions, as belonging no longer to the Catholic

worship. They would not be banished beyond the frontier, but they would have no share in the budget. Constantine could not act with less severity: there was not then any budget of worship. So he could not punish the Arians by the suppression of their salary: exile was the slightest chastisement he could inflict. The Emperor did not infringe on the right of the bishops: he had allowed them to judge alone the question of doctrine; but they having declared that the Arians injured Christianity, even while desiring to remain of the Christian society, he exercised his sovereign authority to punish those who troubled its peace.

When the Council had ended its labors, it, by a circular letter, acquainted the churches of the East and the West with its decisions. The Emperor, on his part, addressed to all the bishops of the world a rescript, which, before sending, he caused to be read to the Fathers of the Council. It is an admirable monument of his sincere piety as well as of his desire for peace and unity.

“Constantine Augustus, to the Catholic Churches throughout the World: The prosperity which the republic enjoys under my sceptre is the most striking proof of the protection which Almighty God deigns to extend over me. It was on my part a duty of gratitude, to labor to reëstablish in the bosom of the Catholic Church unity of faith, sincerity of mutual concord in worship, and the love of Jesus Christ our Lord. To attain this end, it was indispensable to convoke together all the bishops of Catholicity, at least the majority of them, and sub-

mit to their examination the controverted dogmatical points. I have done so; I have assembled around me this august Senate of Jesus Christ. In my presence,—for I make no mystery of the faith I profess in common with you, it is my proudest title of glory;—in my presence the most profound discussion has been held. After mature examination, with unanimous voice, the sentence was pronounced, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and the Symbol of the only and true faith was drawn up. Henceforth, no more revision will be possible, no more controversy can be raised on this point.”

Constantine esteemed himself so happy at having procured peace to the Church that he was desirous of celebrating the close of the Council by a great feast, which celebration was so much the more solemn because it coincided with the twentieth anniversary of the Emperor's accession to the throne. All the bishops took part in that festival of rejoicing, the splendor of which was worthy of Constantine's piety and magnificence. Eusebius of Cæsarea, describes this feast with an enthusiasm which the greater number of the prelates must have shared. It was a spectacle as touching as unprecedented. The Emperor's body-guards, drawn sword in hand, lined the vestibule, and the arms with which they rendered the military salute were no longer crimsoned in the blood of the Christians, and the ministers of God passed fearlessly by those extended swords to take their places in the grand hall. *Accubitalia* were arranged in a circle around the table. At the end a couch of honor was fitted up

for the Emperor and the Presidents of the Council. One might believe he was assisting at one of the feasts of the kingdom of Christ, and the reality seemed but a dream to so many illustrious confessors but lately freed from exile, prison, and death. Nor was the festival celebrated in the imperial palace alone; the entire city gave itself up to transports of pious joy; in the houses, in the streets and public places, one beheld only the signs of rejoicing, and friends and relations greeted one another with the glad exclamations:

“The Council has glorified the Word of God!”

“Blessed be the patriarchs of Antioch and Alexandria!”

“And the venerable Osius!”

“And the youthful Athanasius!”

“They have confounded the impiety of Arius!”

“Anathema to those who say that the Son of God is a creature!”

“Christ protected Constantine, and Constantine has defended Christ!”

“Long life to our invincible Emperor!”

Valerian, however, had but little share in the universal rejoicing. With the deepest emotion he had followed every detail of the solemn assembly presided over by the Emperor, and terminated by the condemnation of Arius. He had been moved even to tears on hearing, after the reading of the Creed, the exclamations of the bishops, but indignation filled his soul when Arius obstinately refused to subscribe to that profession of faith.

"What will Thalia do?" he asked himself. "Will she dare to support the Arian heresy, even after its condemnation? Will she understand that it is folly to prefer the isolated negation of a sectary to the unanimous affirmation of the bishops?"

To dissipate a doubt which caused him such cruel suffering, he went, as soon as possible, to Metrodorus's house, but he could learn nothing. Thalia had been suddenly attacked by fever: her head was burning, her eyes gazed vacantly around. Delirium set in, and she muttered only a few incoherent words. Theognis, Arius, and Eusebius of Nicomedia surrounded her bed, and tried to reassure her father. Valerian, terrified, left the house, and hastened to reveal his grief to Vitus.

"Implore God, my dear friend, to give me the strength I need. Thalia's malady is very serious: I may at any moment hear of her death."

"Ah! let us ask, above all, that she may not die in her errors."

"Though it would break my heart, I would willingly resign myself to lose her, if, at that price, I could gain her to our Saviour God."

"She is so young, she may live through the disease. In a few days, doubtless, the fever will pass away. But I trust that not in vain shall the shadow of death have fallen upon her. Returning to herself, may she return also to Jesus Christ and to you!"





CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUSION.

WHEN the decisions of the Council and Constantine's edicts became known, the partisans of Arius held a somewhat stormy meeting in the house of Theognis. Theonas and Secundus, who were, in a few days, to set out for Illyria, were furious, and complained most bitterly of the conduct of Eusebius of Nicomedia.

"You were bound," said they to him, "to remain, like us, faithful to your convictions, instead of cowardly obeying the Emperor's injunction."

"What would you have gained thereby?"

"Had those who refused their subscription been more numerous, they would not have dared to exile them."

"Undeceive yourselves. Under such circumstances they would dare anything. It is useless to resist a force that is all-powerful. To know how to yield when occasion requires it, is a great art. When you saw me subscribe, you should have followed my example."

"Never will we betray Arius. No menace shall shake our constancy."

"When one wishes to succeed, he must know

how to turn aside from difficulties, and not strike his head against them."

"I can understand that it is more agreeable to remain tranquilly in Nicomedia than go into exile, but then one does not pretend to direct a party."

"It was for the interests of the party more than my own that I forced myself to subscribe, since I saw that the Emperor was fully determined to banish the obstinate. Now, I bend before the storm; later, I shall raise my head and act."

"Why not act when they wished to make Arius declare as true what he knows is false?" broke in Thalia, impetuously.

"What should we have done?" asked Eusebius, with a mocking smile.

"Arouse the people," said Thalia.

"They were all against us."

"Remind Constantine that he has proclaimed religious liberty."

"I should but have irritated him the more."

"Brave his anger."

"That would be to lose all. You do not know how to govern men. Let us only gain time, and Constantine shall, in the end, be on our side. Now that he is surrounded by three hundred bishops who condemn our opinions, it is impossible to change him. But when the Council shall be dispersed, and the Emperor alone, then I shall be able to act on his mind. I promise to make him recall from exile those whom he has banished, and, at the same time, to drive Athanasius from Alexandria."

"I have had so many proofs of the power and skill of Eusebius," said Arius, "that I confide entirely in him. Let us leave him to act; he alone can save us."

"I hope he'll not leave us too long freezing in Illyria."

Thalia seemed as heart-broken as Arius himself at his condemnation and exile, and so great was her anger, that she could not refrain from reproaching Eusebius with the facility with which he had subscribed to a creed in which the Divinity of the Word was clearly proclaimed. She pretended, also, that the bishops had been intimidated by Constantine's presence.

"Had the Emperor not been there," said she, "the system of Arius would have struck them all as most simple and luminous. The greater number of bishops must, assuredly, have recognized that it freed the Christian doctrine from its most obscure mysteries; but they did not dare to say so before the Emperor. To please him, they agreed with Osius and Athanasius. Neither Eusebius, nor Theognis, nor Patrophilus would have consented to sign the new creed had they not been awed by his authority."

But her rage was unbounded when she learned that Arius's poem had been condemned to the flames; that all those who possessed copies were commanded to give them up without delay; and that whosoever should, in defiance of the Emperor's edict, retain even one, should be liable to the penalty of death.

Already she could perceive in the largest of the public squares of Nice, a merry crowd surrounding a large pile to which an edile was about applying a torch. On this pile lay rolls of parchment, sheets of papyrus, tablets of cedar and cypress wood. Affixed to the end of a lance, planted in the midst of those objects destined to the flames, was a large board, bearing this inscription:

"The *Thalia* of the impious Arius must perish by fire. Those who retain any copy of this disgraceful poem, instead of delivering it up to the magistrates, shall perish by fire."

The pile began to blaze, and columns of smoke were, by a gentle breeze, wafted towards the west. Ere long, tongues of flame, darting above the pile, seized their condemned prey, and the crowd burst into noisy acclamations.

"There's one burning!"

"There's another!"

"They are all on fire!"

"None shall escape!"

"Thus perish all impious books!"

"And the blasphemers who write them to insult Christ!"

"Christ alone has rendered Constantine invincible! Christ alone is our God!"

Loud shouts of applause greeted these words. The heat of the fire compelled the crowd to enlarge its circle. The board which held the inscription, as well as the lance to which it was affixed, fell into the flames, which soon became an indistinguish-

able mass; the work of destruction was complete. At times, a fragment of carbonized papyrus would rise with the smoke, and float over the heads of the spectators. Then would the shouts be redoubled.

"It is one of Arius's hymns!"

"It is a fragment of *Thalia*!"

"It escapes from the fire!"

"Let it not fall on me!"

"The wind carries it towards Lybia!"

"That is Arius's country!"

"Cursed be the Lybian, the heretic, the enemy of Christ!"

Metrodorus and his daughter, from a distance, gazed on the tumultuous spectacle. They heard the shouts of the crowd, and read the inscription which recalled Constantine's edict against those who should retain the condemned poem. The rhetorician was deeply moved, but Thalia had no feeling save that of anger, which was but the deeper because she felt her own impotence. Ah! could she but extinguish that fire, speak to that crowd, proclaim herself the friend and disciple of Arius, accuse the bishops of cowardice, and Constantine of tyranny! But what could one do against so many? Who would listen to her? Who would understand her? They would cast her, in horror, into those flames, which had already reduced to ashes the book which bore her name.

"My child," said Metrodorus, whose soul was agitated by fatal presentiments, "we cannot any longer disobey the Emperor's orders."

“What power has he over my soul? His threats can never make me declare that the Son is God like his Father.”

“But think what would befall us, should any one learn we had retained a copy of the poem, in spite of Constantine’s edict?”

“Do you wish me to give it to the magistrates?”

“That would be prudent.”

“What! a copy given me by Arius himself, and written with his own hand! An immortal poem, which bears my name, which shall make me known to posterity! To deprive myself of it that it may be burned as a wicked work! Ah! never! never! I will place it on my heart, and it shall be torn from me only with my life.”

“And suppose a slave should betray you? should accuse you to the magistrates of having braved the imperial edict?”

“I should be more courageous than Eusebius of Nicomedia. I would acknowledge that I have Arius’s poem. I would boast of it. I would prove that it contains only true doctrine, and that the Emperor had no right to devote it to the flames.”

“Unfortunate child! You would be condemned to death!”

“Well, I would die for my faith—without terror, without demanding mercy. Leaving this world, where truth is denied, I would plunge myself into the bosom of God, who would reward me for having adored but Him alone.”

“My daughter! my daughter! take pity on your

father! You are his joy, his pride, his happiness! You must live for him. You must not go to meet death."

Thalia was violently excited. It seemed as if the blood which flowed in her veins was as it were on fire. Her mind wandered. Soon cold sweat broke over her forehead. She trembled from head to foot, and her hands became as cold as marble. After these premonitory symptoms, a violent fever developed itself. For several days she was in a state of excitement and delirium, scarcely interrupted by a few hours of lethargic slumber. In her wanderings she pronounced the names of Valerian and Arius, Eusebius and Constantine. At times she recited a fragment of *Thalia*, or broke out in a song. Theognis called in the most eminent physicians, but they declared the young girl's life was in danger, and that they could not answer for her cure. In effect, their remedies all proved powerless. Arius vainly had recourse to the remedies employed in Egypt. The fever continued as violent. Metrodorus, almost distracted, remained day and night by his daughter's bed, moistening her parched lips with cooling beverages, wiping off the sweat that bedewed her face, and answering the incoherent words which fell from her lips. Turning, at times, to Arius and Eusebius, he would exclaim, in despairing accents:

"Save my daughter! save my daughter! You have caused her sickness; you have exalted her imagination. She is attached to your doctrines.

. . . To defend you, she braved the anger of your enemies. . . . Save the most devoted of your disciples."

Valerian's grief was scarcely less than that of Metrodorus, and, day by day, he went to mingle his tears with those of the unhappy father, and gaze with him on the face of the sick girl, seeking there, in vain, some sign of recovery. But Thalia did not recognize him, and frequently spoke of him as if he were absent.

"He always loves me! . . . the enemies of Arius wish to separate us. . . . Valerian, do not follow their advice listen only to your own heart. He draws from my finger the betrothal ring, but he will restore it to me. . . . What does it matter whether I believe in Christ, Valerian since I believe in your love? What thick smoke! what flames! O my father, let us fly from this fire. . . . They wish to burn *Thalia*, but, like the phoenix, it shall rise from its ashes. . . . *Thalia* cannot be lost; Arius has rendered it immortal. . . . No, I will not give up the book to you. . . . I laugh at Constantine and his edict, this poem is sacred to me, and I will carry it even to the grave."

She crossed her arms on her breast as if to protect the poem concealed under her tunic. Her words were like arrows to the heart of Valerian, who from them learned, despite their incoherency, that she had not submitted to the authority of the Council, but was still under Arius's influence. But it was not from Thalia delirious, but from Thalia,

in the full enjoyment of reason, that he expected the answer which was to render him happy or miserable.

"When the height of delirium shall have passed away," said he to himself, "she will comprehend the gravity of her malady, and, face to face with death, she will humble herself before God. . . . Were she to make an act of faith in Christ the Redeemer, her health would, I am sure, be restored, and with it our former ardent affection. But should the delirium continue! . . . What if she should, with blasphemy in her heart, be summoned before the dread tribunal of Christ, who judges the living and the dead! . . ."

While Valerian was thus endeavoring to console Metrodorus and reassure himself, Arius, followed by Eusebius of Nicomedia, entered. He was about departing to the place of his exile, and had come to bid the rhetorician farewell. Valerian required all his strength of mind to restrain the indignation he felt at the sight of Arius standing by the bed of his victim.

"I am deeply grieved, my dear friend, to leave you under such painful circumstances; but the Emperor's edict cannot be eluded by friendship, and I dare not any longer delay my departure into exile. The remembrance of this dear child, and her indomitable courage, will aid me to resign myself to the trials I am about to undergo in a strange land."

"It depended on yourself not to leave your friends," responded the rhetorician. "You had

only to follow the example of Eusebius, and subscribe to the Nicene Creed. Then your poem would not have been publicly burned, nor should my daughter have become ill."

"It is better to suffer persecution for justice than sacrifice truth to error," answered Arius, with an affected sweetness, which caused Valerian to shudder.

"When there is question of Christian doctrine," cried he, "is it the voice of one man alone, and his peculiar system, which expresses the truth, or the voice of three hundred bishops speaking in the name of the universal Church?"

"The prelates assembled at Nice could not freely express their opinion: they were intimidated by the presence of the Emperor. I appeal to an ulterior council, which shall be subjected to no party influence."

"If you alone possess the truth, if you alone understand Christianity, if you alone are called to accommodate it to the wants of the present epoch, you must be a friend of God, a saint among saints, loaded with all the favors of heaven."

"I hope so."

"Well, then, prove it. Obtain of God, by your prayers, the cure of this young maiden. God will not refuse this favor to him who alone knows what should be believed, while three hundred bishops assembled in council have been deceived."

Arius was momentarily disconcerted: he had no faith in the efficacy of his prayers, but was unwilling to acknowledge it.

"The holy cause I am chosen to defend must have its martyrs," said he, finally. "I must undergo the pains of exile, but this young girl's sacrifice must, perhaps, be more complete."

"My daughter shall not die," cried Metrodorus, in despair.

"Let us resign ourselves to the will of God."

"No; she will not die," said Valerian. "What this impious man cannot do, shall be effected by a saint. I will go and find one of those who have proclaimed in council the Divinity of Jesus Christ, and will bring him to our dear patient. At his prayers Thalia shall be restored to health."

"If her hour is come, no supplication can prolong her life."

"Shame on the blasphemer who has no faith in prayer!" cried Valerian, recoiling in horror.

"And who would deprive a father of his last hope!" murmured Metrodorus.

Valerian hastened to Vitus, and related all that had passed, as well as the promise he had made to bring to Thalia a servant of Christ, whose prayers should be so powerful before God as to win her immediate restoration to health.

"What an unexceptionable proof of the true faith it would be to Metrodorus and his daughter," said Vitus, "were Athanasius to obtain a cure Arius has not dared to ask!"

"The Lord Himself inspires you! Yes, Athanasius can restore Thalia to my love. Let us entreat him to accompany us to the home of the patient."

Athanasius at first refused to do as Valerian desired, saying that his prayers had not such power with God.

“Address yourself,” said he, “to one of those blessed bishops who edified us during the Council, —to Spiridion of Tremithus, Leontius of Cæsarea, Nicholas of Myra, or James of Nisibis. They have not left Nice. God will, by a miracle, signalize their passage through this city.”

“Dear Athanasius,” said Vitus, “in Thalia’s eyes you are Arius’s most declared antagonist. If to you she owe the cure of the body, to you also she will owe the cure of her soul. When, at your prayers, she shall be healed, and shall learn that Arius would not ask this favor of God, knowing he would not be heard, she will clearly see on which side is charity, which has the truth.”

Athanasius could no longer resist. Forgetting how often he had been distressed by Thalia’s conduct in Egypt, and seeing in her only a soul to be saved, he followed Valerian and Vitus to the rhetorician’s house.

“Peace to this house!” said Athanasius on entering.

“And to all who dwell therein,” responded Vitus.

They found Thalia in one of her most violent paroxysms of delirium.

“The God of Arius,” murmured she, “is the true God. . . . I will follow him into exile. . . . Together we will await the hour of triumph. . . .

Together we will return to Egypt. . . . Athanasius shall be expelled from Alexandria, Constantine driven back to the frontiers of Gaul."

"Heal my daughter," cried Metrodorus, in a voice choked with tears, "and we will recognize that the doctrine of Arius is false; we will adore Christ the Redeemer."

"Nothing is impossible to God," replied Athanasius. "Let us pray together."

As he raised his suppliant hands to heaven, the ardor of faith illumined his countenance, and his open eyes seemed to be gazing on the eternal splendors. Suddenly he interrupted his prayer.

"Has not your daughter some charm or other cursed object about her?" asked he of Metrodorus.

"Alas, I must then acknowledge it," answered the latter, trembling. "Do not betray us, nor deliver us up to justice. My daughter keeps about her a copy of the poem which bears her name. Arius himself wrote it with his own hand, and gave it to her. . . ."

"Burn it!"

As Thalia had sunk into lethargy, her father could, without rousing her, take the sheets of papyrus which she carried on her breast as a sacred relic. In a moment, they were reduced to ashes, and Athanasius resumed his prayer, which was again interrupted by Metrodorus's cries of joy.

"My daughter is saved!"

Thalia opened her eyes, and gazed around her as calmly as if awaking from a refreshing slumber.

The fever had completely disappeared, and her mind no longer wandered.

"I am well, my father; it seems to me I have slept for a long time. Valerian! You are kind not to forget me. Your friends, too, are with you. I recognize Vitus; but the other heavens! do not my eyes deceive me? Is it Athanasius?"

"Yes; it is he, my child. It is he who has drawn you forth from the shadows of death, and restored you to your father. If the malady, which for ten days afflicted you, has suddenly disappeared, it is to his prayers you owe it."

"Where is Arius?"

"He is gone into exile, justly punished for having denied the Divinity of Christ."

"What! you also, father? do you take part with his enemies? Christ is not God."

"It is Christ who has been invoked by Athanasius; Christ has answered his prayer; to Christ you owe your life."

"I will show you, my father, what has saved me."

She sought under her tunic for Arius's poem; then fright and anger were imprinted on her countenance.

"Do not look for that impious book, my daughter. We have obeyed the Emperor's orders, and delivered it to the flames. It would have caused your ruin; but Athanasius saved you."

"You are the sport of an intrigue, my father.

Somebody has, during my sleep, robbed me of a book dearer to me than life. But it is confided to my memory; I shall transcribe it, and place it again on my heart."

"Thalia, in the name of our love, believe your father's words. Every day I have wept by your bed of suffering. I have seen with my own eyes all that transpired. Arius could do nothing for you. Notwithstanding my entreaties, he would not even pray for you, pretending that you must die of that malady. Athanasius came; he prayed for you; you are cured."

"No; never will I believe that I owe my health to one who dares to say there are two Gods."

"Never did I utter such blasphemy," said Athanasius. "I have always taught that there is one only God; but that this God exists in three distinct persons, whom we call the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Whoever wishes to be saved must, before all, believe the mystery of the most Holy Trinity. Whoever, with Sabellius, confounds the Divine Persons, or divides the Divine Substance, like Arius, shall perish eternally."

"Vain threats! I shall always believe what Arius believes, and I shall be saved."

"Unfortunate creature! God will punish your obstinacy and pride."

"Thalia, must we then separate forever?" asked Valerian, in consternation.

"Let Athanasius say," responded she. "Love me as I love you. I do not ask you if your law is

true. Do not you ask me if I am in error. To be happy, it is not necessary we should both have the same tastes and opinions in everything."

"If I were a pagan, I should not trouble myself about your religious belief; but being a Christian, I can never espouse a woman who refuses to adore Jesus Christ."

"God will recompense your faith and console your heart," said Athanasius, as, with deep emotion, he clasped Valerian's hand.

A painful silence followed these words. Metrodorus endeavored to lead his daughter to better sentiments; but what could prevail over that soul whom a miraculous cure had failed to touch?

"Father," said she, "must you receive from me a lesson of courage and firmness?"

"Say, rather, a lesson of pride and obstinacy," muttered Vitus.

Valerian left the house, never more to reënter it. His mind was fully disabused of its illusion. The dream that had so long been the charm of his youth vanished before the terrible reality. She whom he loved had raised between them an insuperable barrier. Nothing now remained but to offer his sacrifice to God. His heart was crushed; but Thalia seemed to him the more deserving of pity. He, indeed, had lost the love of a creature; she had renounced the love of her God.

Metrodorus was in despair. His daughter was restored to him, but his brightest hopes were crushed. The sophisms of Arius no longer de-

ceived him. He had seen the miraculous fruits of Athanasius's prayer, and firmly believed that his doctrine was the truth; but his daughter would not break the chains which bound her to heresy. Neither her father's entreaties, nor Valerian's love, nor the heavenly favor received through the intercession of Athanasius, had been able to vanquish her inflexible pride. Would time, which modifies the strongest resolutions, come to his aid? Alas! the present misfortunes seemed but to presage still greater woes in the future.

Notwithstanding the discretion of Valerian and his friends, it became known throughout Nice that Thalia had been miraculously cured by Athanasius, and that, after her recovery, instead of thanking the Divine Saviour, she had denied His power and insulted Constantine and the Council by protesting that, even unto death, she would remain a faithful disciple of Arius.

Some days later, Metrodorus received an imperial rescript revoking his appointment at court and commanding him to return immediately to Egypt. The bearer also told him that the Emperor, highly incensed at what he had heard of Thalia, had wished to condemn her to a rigorous exile, but that, at Constantia's entreaties, he was content with sending her back to her own country.

This blow was expected by Metrodorus, and so overwhelmed was he with grief that this new stroke found him almost insensible. Exile to a foreign land would not have aggravated his suffering; his

only desire was to fly from men and conceal his misfortunes from their gaze. He was resolved to spend his remaining days in Alexandria, but he feared that his daughter would there subject him to new trials. To what excess, thought he, will she carry her fanaticism? When he informed her that they were obliged to leave Nice and return to Egypt, she showed no signs of irritation.

"Something would have been wanting to my glory," said she, "were I not to be persecuted like Arius. I am happy to suffer with him for the truth, and complain rather of the Emperor's indulgence than of his rigor. He contents himself with sending me to my own country; he spares me because I am a woman."

"He would have punished us more severely, had it not been for Valerian's intercession."

"Do not mention Valerian again; he is dead to me. I thought him capable of loving; I was deceived. Let us depart without delay, lest we meet him again. Let us fly from this city in which three hundred courtier-bishops have, to please Constantine, condemned Arius."

Metrodorus and his daughter, having thanked Theognis for his hospitality, left Nice like fugitives, with no escort save their two slaves, and went to Cyzicus, which port was frequented by numerous vessels. On the day after their arrival, they went on board the vessel which was to bear them to Alexandria; there were only a few passengers besides themselves. As they left the port, the

waters lay calm and peaceful, scarcely a breath of wind seemed to ripple their surface; but when the ship reached that point where on its left rose the celebrated city of Ephesus, the sea began to be stormy. Little by little the waves rose; the wind blowing from the south, covered the heavens with thick clouds, whose increase the pilot beheld with anxious eye; but when they came in sight of Patmos, the tempest burst upon them in all its fury. The wind whistled through the cordage, the waves swept over the sides of the vessel, the rumbling of the thunder answered the roaring of the waves, lightning flashed from the clouds, and the rain fell in torrents. The terrified passengers questioned the pilot.

"We will steer for the land," answered he, "but the furious sea may engulf our vessel before we reach it. God alone can save us."

"Let us invoke the Diana of Ephesus," said the pagans.

"Let us pray to Jesus Christ!" exclaimed the Christians, who were more numerous.

"Let us pray to the Father Almighty! Christ is not God!" cried Thalia, who, standing on the deck, her unbound hair floating in the wind, seemed maddened by the fury of the heaving waves, less uncontrollable than the storm which raged in her heart.

"Let no one blaspheme Christ, or we shall all perish," said a passenger.

In a voice, which rose above the fury of the waves, Thalia began the sailors' Arian chant:

“But if Christ should permit that the pilot
Our bark to destruction should steer,
Our complaint we would make to the Father,—
The God whom alone we revere,
More than the ox Apis,
And the god Serapis.”

“It is an Arian! it is an Arian!” cried the passengers in horror.

“Throw her into the sea, the impious wretch!”

“It is she who draws down on us the anger of heaven!”

“She is my daughter,” said Metrodorus, imploring with clasped hands the pity of the passengers. “Pardon her! . . . her mind is deranged!”

Over the rocks of Patmos seemed to hover the spirit of the Beloved Apostle who, on that isle, wrote his Apocalypse. One might almost imagine he heard, above the roaring of the storm, that powerful voice: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was in God, and the Word was God.”

Thalia, as frantic as if madness had again seized her, began anew her song:

“But if Christ ——”

She never finished. An immense wave crashing over the deck, enveloped her in a cloud of spray, and bore her like a toy into the furious flood.

“My child! save my child!” cried Metrodorus, despairingly, seeing Thalia tossed upon the waves far from the ship; then she sank, and disappeared in the abyss.

"God has punished her who blasphemed Christ," said the passengers.

"Now that the impious wretch has, like Pharaoh, been swallowed up in the waves, the tempest will be appeased."

"Ten thousand sesterces to whoever shall save my daughter!" repeated the desolate Metrodorus.

He stood on the deck, and his eyes, bathed in tears, vainly looked over the raging waters, hoping to see the raven hair or white tunic of his daughter. Even while he gazed, a huge billow like that which had carried off his daughter swept over the bulwarks,—when the foam had cleared away, Metrodorus no longer stood on the deck. His body floated for some moments, then he, too, disappeared in the raging abyss, and the sea gave not up its double prey.

Then the fury of the tempest suddenly abated; the winds grew calm; the waves peaceful; the rain ceased, and a ray of sunlight, piercing through the clouds, announced that the danger was over. The passengers burst into grateful thanksgivings to heaven, nor did they forget they had been the witnesses of a striking instance of Divine justice.

The news of this sad event was soon spread. Valerian was overwhelmed on learning the terrible fate that had befallen Thalia even while the words of blasphemy were on her lips. But another sorrow awaited him. A messenger came from Marseilles to apprise him that his father was dangerously ill, and wished to see him again before his

death. The Emperor's leave was soon obtained, and he started on his journey. Overwhelmed as he was with sadness and disappointment, his only desire was to fly from the world, to console his father's last hours, and then to spend in retreat the remaining years of his life.

When Valerian left Nice, the prelates who had taken part in the Council were about to depart to their respective churches. Constantine, however, would assemble them once more together, that he might bid them farewell and engage them to maintain energetically concord and peace, as also to recommend himself to their prayers. Approaching Potamon and Paphnutius, he respectfully kissed the scars they had received in their bloody combat for the faith. How had times changed since the days of Nero! As a souvenir of the days that had passed, he generously presented to the bishops valuable gifts, which were doubly enhanced by being received from his hand. He also wrote to the governors of the provinces, telling them to distribute each year a certain quantity of corn to the widows, virgins, and the clergy.

Great as was the distance between Nice and Marseilles, it seemed even greater to Valerian, who, absorbed in his grief, cared not to gaze on the plains of Troy, or the shores of Greece and Italy, along which the vessel coasted. He longed to reach his journey's end. Nature for him had no more charms. A blighting wind had passed over his soul, like the icy breath of winter, which robs

the forests of their verdure. Life held no joys for him. The delights of pure love had been his, but, alas, with what bitterness had they been succeeded!

That fair young girl, whose charms had brightened his youth, had disappeared in the waves, blaspheming Christ amid the horrors of the tempest. Whenever he cast his eyes on the vast expanse of water that lay around him, he almost fancied he could see her corpse floating before him.

His voyage, however, was peaceful, and the vessel, wafted by favorable winds, sped onwards over the untroubled sea.

The sun, whose splendor no clouds veiled; the stars, which glittered in the tranquil night, seemed ever to say to Valerian:

“The storms of the soul, like those of the sea, shall last but an instant. Lift thy head, now bowed down with sorrow, and look up to heaven, which smiles upon thee. After the darkness shall come light; though now thou dwellest 'neath the shadow of the cross, joy and happiness await thee.”

But Valerian hearkened only to the moanings of his broken heart. Two images incessantly pursued him — the dead Thalia and his dying father.

As soon as the vessel reached the port, Valerian, urged by anxiety, hastened to his father's house, and rapped at the door with frantic eagerness. It was opened by a young girl, who, on perceiving him, uttered a cry of joyful surprise. For a moment he thought he again beheld Thalia, radiant and smiling, but almost immediately he remembered

the lapidary's daughter who adorned with inscriptions and bas-reliefs the Christian tombs of the Aliscamps, and he exclaimed:

"What! you are here, Rhodania?"

Yes, it was indeed Rhodania; but she, who, at his departure, had been but a charming child, had developed into a ravishingly beautiful maiden. Her smile had still the same sweetness, but her glance was more timid, and her face became more readily suffused with blushes.

As she accompanied Valerian to his father's chamber, she related how it came that he found her in Marseilles, and even in his father's house.

"Since peace and liberty have been granted the Christians by Constantine's edict, churches have been erected on all sides. Marseilles constructed two, one near the port, the other near the tombs of St. Victor and his companions. As skilful sculptors are very rare here, my father and I were invited to come and sculpture the altars to be erected in the Church of Blessed Victor and in that of the Blessed Virgin.

"Some days after our arrival, I met on the Forum an old man whom I knew not, yet who regarded me so steadfastly that I quickened my pace. He, however, came to me, and said:

"'You do not belong to Marseilles, my child?'

"'No,' answered I, 'I came from Arles a few days ago with my father.'

"'From Arles!' exclaimed he. 'Are not you the sister of a young girl who, a few months since, embarked here for Alexandria?'

“‘I think you mean the beautiful Thalia, daughter of the rhetorician Metrodorus,’ responded I, smiling. ‘I am neither her sister, nor her relation, but people say we resemble each other. Valerian, who commanded the cohort in garrison at Arles, was much struck by the resemblance.’

“‘What! you know Valerian? He is my son.’

“From that day your father often came to see me working at the altars, just as formerly you used to come to the tombs of the Aliscamps. He and my father became united by one of those strong and close friendships which are the sweetest consolation of the aged. We have often spoken of you and Thalia,” added Rhodania, blushing, “and have prayed fervently for your happiness. Last year your father fell ill, and we then came to live with him, that we might be able to alleviate his sufferings. Nor have our endeavors been fruitless, for your father has almost recovered his health. He suffers still in his limbs, which do not allow of his walking as much as formerly.”

“Nevertheless they can carry me to my son,” broke in the old centurion, who, hearing these last words, hurried towards Valerian, and, trembling with joy, clasped him in his arms and covered him with caresses.

Anxious not to disturb the joy which his return had brought to his father’s house, Valerian would willingly have tried to banish Thalia from his thoughts, but being questioned, he was obliged to relate the struggle his heart had had to endure on

his perceiving at Rome Thalia's attachment to the doctrines of Arius; her sickness at Nice, her cure, and her lamentable death.

Rhodania could not, without deep emotion, hear the sad recital, and the two old men deplored her fate with that sorrow to be expected of those whose charity is equal to their faith. But they soon ceased to speak of Thalia; as if by mutual consent, they avoided alluding to what was for them so full of bitter memories.

Old Victor's health seemed to improve daily, and the sculptor and his daughter resumed their interrupted labors. Valerian seemed to be living over again the happy days of the past. At times he resorted to the workshop of Liberius, where, with deep interest, he watched the progress of Rhodania's labors, as she engraved letters or sculptured the garlands of flowers which surrounded them. She was engaged on an altar constructed in the form of a table, carved on the four sides, and hollowed out on its upper horizontal surface; on the front she had cut a Greek inscription above the monogram of our Saviour.

Gradually Valerian's admiration passed from the sculptures adorning the altar to her who so skillfully handled her chisel. At first he regarded Rhodania only as an artist, whose beautiful countenance reminded him of the golden dreams of his youth, so soon overshadowed; but ere long he perceived that the amiable child, whom he had remarked in the Aliscamps only for her resem-

blance to Thalia, had become a maiden, accomplished, pious, gentle, and affectionate, whose radiant beauty was but the reflection of her pure soul; and he felt he could again be happy, would she but consent to return his affection. A second love, more serious and gentle than the first, which had by its passionate ardor troubled his life, sprang up in his heart, and he asked himself was it returned by Rhodania. Might he not hope so? Was it not love that gave the tremor to her voice, the blush to her face, the downcast look that veiled her eyes, when she spoke to him? Who better than she deserved to wear the nuptial ring which Thalia had been unwilling to receive in the name of Jesus Christ?

Valerian acquainted his father with the ray of hope that had burst upon his heart and revived therein, sentiments he had thought forever dead.

"My son," said the old man, "were I to have the happiness of seeing you espoused to Rhodania, I would say to the Lord: Now let Thy servant depart in peace. She, who with such filial devotedness has attended your sick father, will most assuredly prove a devoted wife."

His delight was equalled by that of Liberius. Rhodania on being consulted, answered by her smiles and tears of joy. Some days later the Bishop of Marseilles blessed the union of the soldier's son with the artist's daughter.

"I went in search of happiness," said Valerian to Rhodania, "and it awaited in my father's house."



NOTES.

WE have not thought it necessary to add to our recital notes and citations, which would needlessly enlarge this volume: we have confined ourself merely to giving here a few explanations.

Chapters I. and II. — We have endeavored, in these two chapters, to give some idea of the manners of the rhetoricians of the fourth century. *The Lives of the Sophists*, written by Eunapius, have furnished us with the principal strokes of our picture. The *Theatrum Veterum Rhetorum*, by Father Crésolles, has also been consulted.

Chapter III. — The centurion relates what we read in the acts of the martyrdom of Saint Victor. The prison in which the martyr was incarcerated has not entirely disappeared.

Chapter IV. — All the tombs of which we speak in this chapter are preserved in the museum at Arles, which is very rich in monuments of this kind.

Chapter V. — It was not in Alexandria alone that the lower classes and hucksters discussed the points disputed between the Arians and Catholics.

“Theology is everywhere but where it should be,” writes St. Gregory of Nyssa. “Go to the banker’s for money, you will be saluted with a dissertation on the begotten and the unbegotten. If you go to buy bread, the baker cannot wait on you without telling you that the Father is greater, more ancient, more powerful than the Son. You go to the baths; you ask the server the degree of heat in your bath. He will answer you that the Son is not precisely a creature, neither is He increated, but that He has come forth from

nonentity. What name shall we give this contagious itch for disputing? Is it mania? is it passion? In any case, it is an epidemical lunacy, which turns every head." (*Tract de Spiritu Sancto*.)

There remains of the *Thalia* of Arius only a few fragments, quoted by St. Athanasius.

Chapter VI. — St. Athanasius complains that the pagans, in their theatres, made a mockery of the religious discussions to which Arianism had given birth. We have tried to give a sketch of one of their plays. "They mock us in their theatres," wrote St. Gregory of Nazianzum, some years later. "No pieces are more applauded than those in which Christians are the butt of raileries and outrages." (*Apologet on Discours sur le Sacerdoce*, 84.)

Chapter IX. — Historians are divided in regard to the time and circumstances of Constantine's baptism. According to some, it took place, as we have related, in the Lateran palace, after the tragical deaths of Crispus and Fausta. According to others, Constantine was baptized, shortly before his death, by Eusebius of Nicomedia. The first opinion seems to us the more probable. There is against it, it is true, a text in Eusebius of Cæsarea; but those who base their opinion on that have against them the traditions of both the Churches of the East and of Rome.

Chapter XI. — We have wished, in this chapter, to speak of the great burst of eloquence and poetry which followed Constantine's edict of liberty. Those verses put into the mouth of Apollinaris are pure invention: we have now of his poetry only a paraphrase on the Psalms.

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